



SUPERMAN

The Superman fantasy had a strong effect on all of us who grew up in the 1940s. I had my stash of ACTION, SUPERMAN, and WORLD'S FINEST COMICS neatly stored on a bookshelf near my bed and I guarded them carefully against the potential attacks of my younger brother and sister who were prone to fight over them and tear them up rather than read and cherish them. When we played in the yard after school it was always a battle to see who would play Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. Costumes were makeshift, usually a towel around my neck held in place with a safety pin. Flying was running while making a kind of swishing sound by pursing the lips and blowing air through them. It was easier to get into a flying fantasy on a bicycle, but I was nearly out of my Superman phase by the time my Schwinn came along.

Most of the **SUPERMAN** quarterlies I had showed the Man of Steel in a humorous situation. I remember one of them had him breaking a barber's scissors with his hair. This made me wonder how Luthor could cut that hair of Superman's so easily in **SUPERMAN IV**. I expect the invulnerable one did get a haircut now and then or he would have looked like a Jewish hippy, but where he got his trim is anyone's guess. Kryptonian scissors back at the old Fortress of Solitude?

The comic stars of the forties had a way of looking like popular movie actors and actresses. If you traced their photographs, you'd see this right away. Superman would look a lot like Cary Grant, Captain Marvel like Fred MacMurray, Dick Tracy like James Cagney (trace his profile and see), and Wonder Woman like Hedy Lamarr. I thought it was funny when the characters went on film, because few of them were played by actors who looked anything like them. Ralph Byrd was okay, but he was no Cagney and George Reeves just looked like a chubby middle-aged man in a pair of pajamas with an S on them. The movies have done better lately. Chris Reeve is light years beyond his predecessors and Linda Carter put much more life into Wonder Woman than she ever had in the comic book.

DC Comics is celebrating the 50th birthday of Superman this year for some strange reason, but he's really 55. The first story was laid out by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1933. Both were Cleveland high school students and avid Science Fiction fans. Philip Wylie's novel, **GLADIATOR** (1930), is the main origin of Superman with Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon contributing costumes and special effects. It's very likely Superman wound up with cape and boots because Alex Raymond was prone to trace movie stills into **FLASH GORDON** and he preferred swashbuckling action a la films about **ROBIN HOOD**, **THE THREE MUSKETEERS**, and parodies of romantic adventure like **CYRANO DE BERGERAC** and **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL**.

Superman was the ultimate fantasy for a pair of young Jewish boys growing up in an anti-semitic environment. Siegel and Shuster were both short men, both small in school, and it's likely they had their share of pushing around from the athletes. Through Superman, they could express themselves, get back at the bullies, get even. Just as they were forced to keep their own identities secret, so it would be for their character, and Superman took on the guise of Clark Kent early in his earthly life. The name was a combination of Clark "Doc" Savage and Kent "The Shadow" Allard, thus linking Superman with pulp science fiction tradition. It was a fantasy all boys could enjoy. We knew we were really a lot more than the adult world suspected, that we were super people, that one day we would throw off the uniforms put on us by the adult world and fly away to freedom. We might have our lunch money stolen on the playground or get tripped on the stairs, but nothing like this would ever happen to Superman! When he was put together from various sources by these two high school boys, America had just gone into a serious economic depression, one which would last until the beginning of World War II in 1941. Grown men, thrown out of work, unable to feed their families, would gain some symbolic relief from the fantasies in **SUPERMAN**, and they did. Do not think the millions of comic books sold in the thirties and forties were sold specifically to children. Comics were widely read by soldiers and sailors on the battlefields and Superman was on the cover of a magazine (now monthly) fighting the enemy.

The early Siegel and Shuster collaborations were simply cops and robber stories, more stimulated by the success of **DICK TRACY** (1931) than by many of the sources noted by Jim Steranko in his history of the comics. The boys had their own detective, Slam Bradley, but by 1933, gangster stories were too common and the possibilities for a human detective too limited. Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon had shown that it was time for super heroes to make a comeback. Hercules and Atlas must be reborn. Superman would be all of these and more.

In the beginning, Superman didn't fly. He leaped around like a grasshopper. He did this because Siegel and Shuster were imitating Buck Rogers who leaped around with the aid of an anti-gravity belt, but they were also copying Wylie's idea from **GLADIATOR**. In that fascinating novel, a scientist concocts a serum from the juices of various insects, one of which is a grasshopper, and injects it into his pregnant wife. The child is born with the qualities of these insects, one of which is the jumping ability of a grasshopper. In the first Superman story, Shuster even drew a grasshopper next to Superman so everyone would get the message. In the radio shows, which we heard at home everyday at 5:15, Clayton Collier always said that Superman was "able to leap tall buildings with a single bound." Much later, he

COMIX WAVE 58. January, 1988. © Clay Geerdes, Box 7081, Berkeley, California. All Rights Reserved. Membership if \$7.50 a year. 12 issues of this newsletter are included. This issue dedicated to Siegel and Shuster. The character of Superman is © Warner Communications.

would be flying, not leaping. Whether or not the writers ever explained how this happened, I don't know. Superman was not the first flying character by any means. Angels flew in the Old Testament and fairies flew around in numerous 19th century tales. It was the fairy half of Peter Pan that enabled him to fly. L. Frank Baum had a boy flying around having adventures in his 1902, **THE MASTER KEY**, while winged men and women had appeared in numerous pulp stories.

In most comic book fantasies, there are no parents. Indeed, **DICK TRACY** begins with the death of the parents, giving Dick his lifelong motive, that of fighting crime and avenging their death. In **SUPERMAN**, the parents are killed off when Krypton explodes. The reason for this type of beginning is twofold. First, the reader is assumed to be a child and killing off the parents not only fulfills a child's fantasy of overthrowing the adult world and taking power, but it also moves him into immediate control, allowing him to experience the subsequent fantasy. He could not experience it freely with parents on the scene, but would have to repress it. We forget when we grow up that children often believe that adults can read their thoughts and this belief enforces repression. In many comic stories, the child can work out a patricide fantasy and a subsequent revenge fantasy. Included is a rescue fantasy, because the child often wishes a parent dead, then wants to save that parent from the death-wish. It is significant that Superman saves Lois Lane from death so many times over the years. Lois is Mom and Clark is meek and subservient around her as a child would be. He is also as protective as a son. Perry White is the stern father. The entire fantasy would not have endured to the present without incorporating all of these elements in an effective way.

There are serious problems in the material. Superman is an extra-terrestrial. Why would he hide his superior strength and lead a mundane life on this planet when he is capable of going anywhere in the universe he pleases? What would he care about human morality? Why would he fake a human life and deny himself? How could a pair of

glasses hide his identity from someone who sees him everyday? Lois Lane would recognize him in a second. His magic trappings often make him absurd. His x-ray vision is an adolescent fantasy, nothing more than teenaged voyeurism. That Kryptonite would make him weak is as doubtful as red Kryptonite making him crazy. It was probably just LSD in disguise. Superman's motivation is never that clear. If he is a superior being, why is he always involved in such trivial activities? Why would he want to fight crime, to save humans from getting mugged? Why wouldn't he simply solve some of the serious social problems that cause crime? It was nice to see Superman getting rid of all the nuclear weapons in **SUPERMAN IV**, but what took him so long? Why would he even allow them to be made? So Jor-El told him not to interfere with humankind. So what? If he is a superior being, he would ignore advice like that and do what he saw to be the best for mankind.

That Superman is immortal is hard to deal with. If we think of the material at all, we have to realize that Lois Lane would be at least 70 by now, that Perry White would be long dead, and even Jimmy Olsen would be nearing his retirement. Superman, meanwhile, like Dorian Gray, would still be as young as he always was. We know he aged in the beginning, because we saw him grow from Superbaby into Superboy and finally into his current character, but for at least 55 years now he has looked the same, give or take artistic interpretations.

As product, Superman is still on top of it, still doing it for lots of kids and adults. He kept DC from going out of business when the comics slumped, because they made their money from licensing him, and all those millions made over the years aren't bad on an original investment of \$130. The fantasy of Superman continues to compete, but the films have been aimed at adults more than kids, and there are many new characters who command attention these days. There was no Superman at the San Diego Comic Convention's costume contest, and this is an index of which characters are happening for the kids.

CLAY GEERDES



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METAPHYSIX is 50¢/stamp from Jim Ryan 41 Forest Ave., Albany, N Y 12208.* THIS COMIC IS VILE. 50¢/st from CW. Box 7081, Berkeley, CA 94707.* DISTORTED FEATURES is 25¢/st from Mike Morris, POB 4687, Portland, ORE 97208.* SHAMAN 48 and FIRECRACKERS 7 are \$1/.22 from Bill Dockery, 3226-A River Ave., Columbus, GA 31904.* MISC COMICS 23 is \$2.56 pp from HSC, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert MN 55741-9631. Big issue. Lots of nice art.* SACRATOMATO 1 is 50¢st from Lynn Hansen, 1834 Bell St., #21, Sacramento, Ca 95825.* NART 4 is 50¢/st from Jim Siergey, 4135 N Hermitage, Chicago, IL 60613.* WORLD OF ELZON 3 and 4 go for \$1 each pp. Kenny Moran, 244 Balmoral, Wpg., Man., Canada R3C 1X6.* ASSASSIN CAT 1 is 50¢/st from Willard Petrey, Jr., Rt 9 Abbey Village, Apt 6-C, Parkersburg, WV 26101.* SHE-RAW is 50¢ st from Carole Sobocinski, POB 3433, Chicago, 60654.* UNDERGROUND SURREALIST MAG is \$3.73 pp from Mick Cusimano, POB 2565, Cambridge, MA 02238.

DOG BOY 8 is out. If you're missing Steve Lafler's stuff, you shouldn't. USAGI YOJIMBO is up to 5 and still good reading. VIC BLOOD 1 is a good one, story by Harlan Ellison with art by Richard Corben. EL VIBORA 91 is \$7.50 from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. THE ICE KING OF OZ is superb. From First by Eric Shanower.*

THE BETTY PAGES is a new fanzine. \$5 from 88 Lexington Ave., 9-C, New York 10016. A Torchy story by Ward.* CEREBUS AT 102. MECHTHINGS 2 by Brad Foster from Renegade. C.G.



THE RETURN OF BILTMORE OSWALD

In case you thought Popeye was the first cartoon sailor, let me introduce you to Biltmore Oswald. He appears in two collections, both reprinted from **THE BROADSIDE: A JOURNAL FOR THE NAVAL RESERVE FORCE**. The first was printed in 1918 as **BILTMORE OSWALD: THE DIARY OF A HAPLESS RECRUIT**. The sequel, **OUT O' LUCK: BILTMORE OSWALD VERY MUCH AT SEA**, followed in 1919. The cartoonist who did the 64 illustrations that appear in these books was Richard "Dick" Dorgan, a member of the bulb-nose and bigfoot school of cartooning that dominated the teens. Oswald was the precedent to Sergeant George Baker's **SAD SACK** and Mort Walker's **BETLE BAILEY**, the original master of ineptitude, the guy who had two left feet and couldn't get anything right. He dropped his gun on the parade ground and he dropped his seabag on the way up the gangplank to his first sea-going billet. If it could be done wrong, Oswald would find a way to do it.

BILTMORE OSWALD and **OUT O' LUCK** are written in the form of illustrated diaries. In the former, Oswald goes through boot training at a camp located in Pelham, New Jersey. The time is 1917 and the occasion is World War 1, the "war to end all wars". It was a time when jazz was beginning to be popular in New York, when cars were becoming more plentiful and private, and when young women were starting to burst out of their Victorian restraints. It was an exciting time, not one to spend marching around to the tunes of John Philip Sousa. Oswald misses his mother, but he misses his "sweetie", Polly, a bit more. His main pal is a stray dog named Mr. Fogerty, and, yes, you ex-sailors out there, a boot was allowed to have a dog in camp in those easy-going days. Surprisingly, or just because they needed the bodies, Oswald makes it through boot camp and in **OUT O' LUCK** he goes to sea where he proceeds to make a record for seasickness, spending a lot of his time at the rail. He has a better time in France than some of his buddies, because he remembers some of his school French, but his days are still hectic. Seeing French men kiss one another in greeting shocks the American guys and This variation in social manners leads to more than one comedy



"THE DEPARTURE WAS NOISY"—Page 6



"I TOOK HIM AROUND AND INTRODUCED HIM TO THE REST OF THE DOGS AND SEVERAL OF THE BETTER SORT OF GOATS"—Page 30

scene in **OUT O' LUCK**.

Nowhere is the class structure more visible, impenetrable, and absolute as it is in the military. Oswald and his enlisted mates spend much of their time avoiding or worrying about the officers who have power over them. The immediate threat is the Company Chief Petty Officer, followed by the Jimmy-legs or Master at Arms, who is like an overseer on a plantation, the hardnose who makes sure everyone is working and obeying the rules. Unlike Popeye, Oswald has to deal with the reality of being a sailor. Eating spinach is not going to get him out of any jams. Since Popeye wore a uniform, we have to assume that he was in the regular Navy, but Elsie Crisler Segar chose to focus on Popeye's off base adventures rather than on his Navy life. Without the uniform, we might assume Popeye was an ex-sailor, but Segar didn't want it that way. It is certainly more than likely that he was aware of **BILTMORE OSWALD**, though he chose to reverse the character completely by turning Popeye into the first super man. Oswald is a kind-hearted, loving little character, always worrying about the welfare of animals, and it bothers him a great deal when a cow is accidentally killed during a duel he has to fight with the husband of a woman who catches Os in his wife's bedroom. Hey, Os was only taking a shower. There was no shower in his room. Popeye can invade the territory of an octopus, smack the creature out of the way and think nothing of it. Oswald isn't like that. Both Oswald and Popeye are chased by women though. They have that in common. One day a married woman picks Oswald up outside the base where he is waiting for a ride into the city. She takes him to a bar and comes on strong. While he knows all the men around envy him for having that beautiful woman leaning on his arm, all Os thinks about is getting away. After all, he's a good guy. He loves his sweetie, Polly, just like Popeye loves Olive Oyl, and he's not going to be unfaithful to her with someone else's wife. In spite of all that booze and jazz, the heart of a proper Edwardian gentleman beats in the breast of Oswald. Suddenly, he notices a man at another table, a man who is staring at him intently, a man who is giving him the meanest look he has ever experienced. Even before his escort announces the



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ALIEN FIRE ends with issue 3. Too bad. This is an interesting comic book with superlative art. It should be an album.* **TITS 'N' CLITS 7** and **WEIRDO 21** out for Christmas from Last Gasp.* **THE PUMA BLUES** and **CEREBUS** (now at 105) continue from Aardvark-Vanaheim.* **GRENDDEL** is in a new cycle from Comico.* **FANTOONS 19** is \$1.64 pp from Edd Vick, 5014 Roosevelt Way, NE, Seattle, WA 98105. 19 is a Funny Food issue.* **SHAMAN 49** is 50¢/st from William Dockery, 3226-A River Avenue, Columbus, GA 31904.* **POSTE MOCKS 1** is \$1 from TKA KOMIKS, 3021 N Southport, Chicago, IL 60657.* **PUSSYFOOTIN' 2** features pin-up drawings by Bob Sheridan and Robert Vaughn. 10922 Fortune Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44111, 8 1/2 x 11. \$1.39 PP.* **THE AMUSING CYNICMAN** is Kenny Moran's parody of Matt Feazell's popular stick figure, Cynicalman. \$1 from 244 Balmoral, Wpg, Man, Canada R3C 1X6. Kenny also has two more issues of **THE WORLD OF ELZON** for \$1 each.* **EL VIBORA 92** is \$7 from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. The **EL VIBORA PASSION SPECIAL** is \$7. Some of these comics are for adults only, so you should send an age statement with your first order. **MAD MAGAZINE** did **THE UNWATCHABLES** in #276. What? You've stopped reading **MAD**? Not me. Hey, don't miss Neal Adams' **TOYBOY**. This is what a comic ought to be, though I finally got around to reading all those **WATCHMEN** and I was favorably impressed with both the story and the cinematic techniques used in the telling.* What happens in Wilmington, Delaware? Well, Tom Watkins will send you his **X-RAY** free, but you should send him 75¢ for the postage.* I see that the poorest one-tenth of the population (most of us) will pay 20 per cent more of their earnings in Federal taxes next year and the richest (a handful of them) will pay 20 per cent less (**CHRONICLE**, NOV., 11, 1987, P. A-21). Well, that figures. Reagan misinterpreted Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and thought it meant War on the Poor.* The new address for **THE DIRECTORY OF ALTERNATIVE COMIC BOOKS** is Jay Kennedy, 877 Norgate Drive, Ridgewood, N J, 07450.* **BABYFAT 60** is coming.* -CLAY GEERDES

fact, we know this is her husband, and our sailor Os is in it up to his neck. Keystone comedy stuff, sure. But a lot of fun nevertheless. Oswald is always the innocent victim. Like Alice, he just walks around the wonderland of New York and things happen to him and he deals with them as best he can. Popeye is never really the innocent. He is a seasoned old salt from the day the Oyls meet him and take him along to the island where they expect to find some treasure. Popeye knows when he is being hustled for hamburger money and sometimes he lets it slide, but at others he lets J. Wellington Wimpy have it. Os wearily accepts those maternal visits to the camp during which his doting mother checks to see if his underwear is clean just as he accepts the loud criticism of the Jimmy-legs when he is out of step on the parade ground. In situations where Popeye would punch his way out, Oswald escapes through his wit.

BILTMORE OSWALD and **OUT O' LUCK** were published in New York by the Frederick A. Stokes Company. The books were not reprinted and they are only available today in private collections. They ought to come out in new editions for three specific reasons: 1) they read well and contain an historical account of an important period in American history, complete with an excellent description of Armistice Day in Times Square in New York City in 1917; and 2) the character of Biltmore Oswald is an obvious precedent to Popeye, Sad Sack, and Beetle Bailey and deserves a place in the history of comic art in America, but, mainly 3) that hapless sailor, Biltmore Oswald, was the alter ego of James Thorne Smith, Jr., the man who would in 1926, create Topper.

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John Held, Jr. was a farm boy from Salt Lake City who moved to New York where he developed a unique drawing style which appeared in many famous magazines and came to symbolize the 1920s. His short-skirted flappers in their cloche hats and beads and his baggy pants shies with their raccoon coats and their hip flasks set the tone for a lot of the comic art of the decade. Held became a high roller, giving parties at his country estate near Westport, Ct. Born January 10, 1889, Held grew up in a two room adobe house with a lean-to kitchen. His father made his living as an engraver, while he played the cornet and led his own band for his own pleasure. John Held, Sr. invented a fountain pen and for a while the family lived over the Held Pen Shop. His mother, Annie, was the daughter of a stage carpenter. An amateur actress, she met John Senior at a church social. The Helds were Mormon farmers. John was the oldest of six children. His father was his first art teacher. Later he studied with the painter/sculptor Mahonri Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, but he didn't graduate from high school and he had no formal training in art. The first money He made with his art was for a block print for the Politz Candy Kitchen on Main Street. He got \$9. At 14, he was copyboy for the Salt Lake TRIBUNE, and at 15, he sold his first drawing to the old LIFE, a humor magazine. At 16, he was a regular cartoonist for the paper, where he was later joined by his friend and colleague Harold Ross. Held and Ross first met on the student newspaper at Westside High School. When Ross took over THE NEW YORKER, he remembered Held's block prints and solicited him to do some work for the mag. Held married Myrtle Jennings, society editor of the TRIBUNE in 1910. Two years later he went alone to New York with four bucks in his pocket. He shared a studio with Hal Burrows, doing streetcar ads and saved his money to sent for Myrtle. He worked in the ad department of John Wanamaker and spent his

evenings drawing. By 1915, his work was appearing in JUDGE, LIFE, SMART SET, and VANITY FAIR. As he started to make better money, he hung out at the right clubs, places like Delmonico's, where he met people like playwright Marc Connelly. When Held took off for Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, in April of 1917, assigned artist on an expedition, Myrtle sent him his walking papers. Marriage to an artist wasn't for her. Returning to New York in 1918, Held came into his own as a cover artist. He married Ada "Johnny" Johnson that year. She was ten years his senior. They moved into a house on Grindstone Hill in rural Weston, Connecticut on the outskirts of the Westport Art Colony. By 1922, Held's drawings of flappers were joined to the short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald [in TALES OF THE JAZZ AGE, Scribner's]. In August of 1922 JUDGE ran a full page called "a Flapper's day."

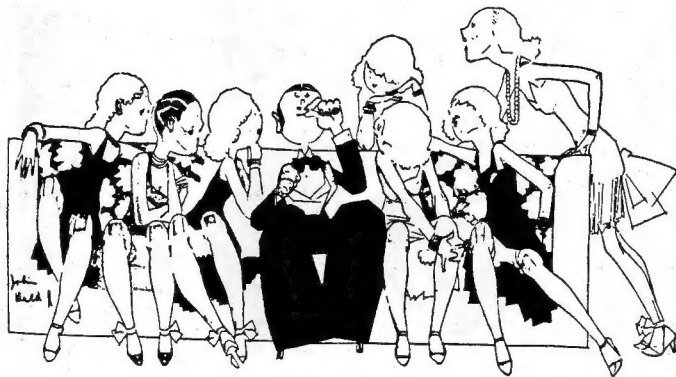
Several factors combined to escalate Held's success. In the 20s before talkies, before radio and long before television--magazines were still in their golden age and humor mags were in their heyday. They were the great mass medium for entertainment. In the 20s, youth, which had fought the great war, took over. Prohibition began in 1920 as Warren G. Harding took office, and the whole country seemed to discover not just booze but sex. Held drew his conception of these things and the style caught on and made him an admired artistic hero of the time. The money rolled in and Held and Johnny moved to a better home and set out to live the good life. He had his own golf course, a Chinese cook, assorted farm hands, horses, dogs, peacocks, and a pair of mules named Abercrombie and Fitch. He plowed and planted and lived the life of a real farmer when he wasn't at the drawing board meeting a deadline. He bought a vacation home in Florida, but never got around to going there after it was bought. He found he had to work more and more to keep up with his new life style and it was wearing him down. Partying and work did not mesh and Held was often at odds with Johnny who liked to dress herself to the teeth and party all night.



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On March 26, 1925, Held was thrown from his wagon and kicked in the head by his panicky Percheron mare. He had a bad fracture and was not expected to live, but his strong physique pulled him through. Hearst hired Held in 1926 to do MERELY MARGY and soon he was getting a quarter of a million a year from Hearst. At the same time, he continued to collect from the New Yorker and numerous ad accounts. He was a fast worker. He would finish 20 drawings by lunch and head for the Coffee House Club. There he hung out with people like Rockwell Kent, Don Marquis, and Rube Goldberg. Sometimes he stopped at the Algonquin. He was not a regular member of the Round Table but he knew Robert Sherwood, Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Harold Ross and the others. Held became a major celebrity. He was even persuaded to run for Congress on the Democratic ticket in Connecticut's fourth district. In 1927, Vanity Fair put John Held on their Hall of Fame list.

On October 24, 1929, the stock market collapsed, and so did Held's career. As the depression set in, hemlines fell and women's skirts reached almost to the ankle, a regression to Victorianism. The cover of LIFE on November 9, 1929, had a drawing of Russell Patterson showing women in long skirts. Held couldn't draw women in long skirts. The image just didn't work for him. He lost his account with Hearst and soon other magazines began to turn down his work. He was estranged from Johnny who he said had made him famous when he really didn't want to be famous. He had a severe "nervous breakdown" in the spring of 1931 and was laid up for a time at the Barnes Sanitarium in Stamford, Connecticut. His art contracts lost, Held turned to writing. His first book of stories, GRIM YOUTH, was out by 1930. The stories detail selfish, pretentious and cruel behavior and the characters are nothing like the free and easy flappers of Held's mid-twenties art. The depression was not fun for the shieks and flappers. Held was rejected by the thirties. He remarried, a beauty queen from Texas named Gladys Moore whom he met when he was judging a pageant in Galveston. He went west and even tried



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What's happening with Joe Bob Briggs? Send him an SASE at POB 33, Dallas, TX 75221 and get his schedule.* DEADBEAT has moved to 1943 Page St, #2, San Francisco, CA 94117. \$10 gets you four issues of this art and poetry tab. Artists include Spain and R. K. Sloane.* Robert Crumb's Jack Kerouac t-shirt is \$13.99 PP from Water Row Press, POB 438, Sudbury, MA 01776. All sizes.* TRUE CRIME TALES, 8 pp, mini, is .25/st from Randy Paske, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741.* CEREBUS 105 brings a new story, ASCENSION'S END. And don't miss THE PUMA BLUES series from Aardvark-Vanaheim. Excellent naturalist art.* WIMMEN'S COMICS 12 is out from Renegade in 3-D. Carol Lay did the cover.* Dell Barras AGENT UNKNOWN 1 from Renegade.* EL VIBORA 93 is \$7 pp from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.* Hal Hargit has resumed control of Ozone Press, POB 95588, Seattle, WA 98145-2588. David Tosh is now at POB 64605, Dallas, TX 75206-0605. TOXIC DUMP COMIX mini is .25/st from him.* PLANET ELZON is \$3.75 from Kenny Moran, 244 Balmoral, Wpg, Man., Canada R3C 1X6. S. Clay Wilson has 30 seconds on MTV in 1988.* Postage goes to a quarter in April, so be prepared to further subsidize the rich. -CLAY GEERDES

to get into movie writing. What got Held out of his suicidal bent in the 30s was his move into theater. He designed the sets for the hit, HELLZAPOPPIN, though he was not listed on the program because of elapsed Union dues. In 1937, he hosted the radio show, "The Varsity Show" for NBC. He was sculpting at the time and he did a show of his horses in 1939. In 1940, Harvard invited him as artist-in-residence and he held the same position later at the University of Georgia. In 1942, Held married his fourth wife, Margaret Schuyler Janes. They moved to a farm in Belmar, New Jersey. Held's widowed mother, Annie, came there to live, and later, his estranged daughter, Judy, was reunited with him. Held was experiencing a renewed interest from the public when he died on March 2, 1958. The Smithsonian did a travelling retrospective called "John Held's America: Flappers, The Jazz Age, and Beyond." A lot of Held's originals are held in the collection of Mrs. John Held, Jr.

Information for this piece is from Dorothy and John Tarrants' "It was the Jazz Age and John Held Jr. Drew it and Loved it,"

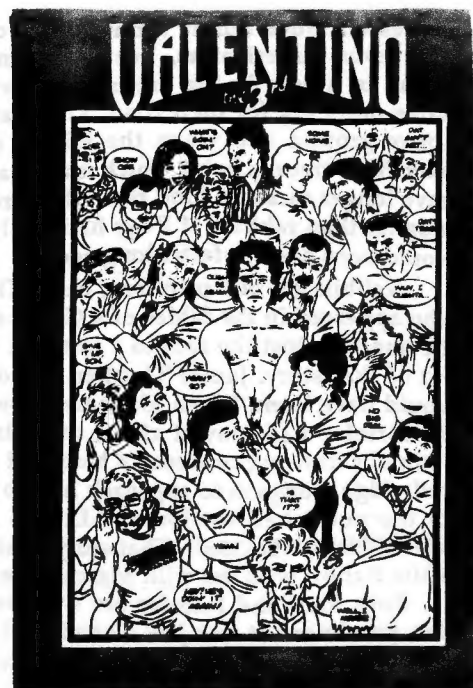


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THE EASTER RABBIT IS A DOE

We all know that male rabbits don't lay eggs to basket up and take around to all the little kids on Easter morning, right? Wrong? So where did we get that idea? How did eggs become associated with Easter in the first place. Well, the egg is a symbol of resurrection and new life in numerous cultures, and it filtered into Christianity by way of Persia and Egypt, but how did that rabbit get into the act? Was he one of the hares that attended the Goddess Harfa in old Scandinavia? Maybe, but it's more likely his association with Easter came from Oestra, a hare-headed teutonic fertility goddess. She made the first hare from a bird and on Oestra's day, the little rabbit laid a single egg in gratitude for being created. The hare is one of the most fertile of mammals. He and his rabbit relatives have covered the earth with 44-70 species extant [those natural historians disagree]. Jack rabbits reached plague proportions in various parts of the world in the late nineteenth century. Frank Norris devoted an entire chapter of his novel, *THE OCTOPUS* (1901), to a giant rabbit-round-up in the San Joaquin Valley, and his account was authentic. Numerous articles about rabbit round-ups appeared in the popular magazines of this period; indeed, Australia still has a problem with lepus over-population. By the mid-1930s, science was being used against these furry little predecessors to the tribble. Long an experimental laboratory animal, rabbit populations were infiltrated with rabbits inflicted with Myxomatosis, a deadly virus. So they all died, huh? Nope. The tough ones became immune and lived on to star in *WATERSHIP DOWN* (1972).

It's almost impossible to get through a single day without encountering the rabbit world. You walk down the street and there are stuffed bunnies in the store windows. You go in for a sugar hit and there is a chocolate rabbit waiting to fatten you up. You sit down on a bus stop to eat your forbidden bunny and someone around you will be talking about bunnies. "She used to be a Playboy bunny, y'know, until they closed the clubs." "Oh, you remember, that actor with the harelip who went to jail for using cocaine in England a couple years back, what was his name?" "Well, I don't know what you want to go out with him for. He's as timid as a rabbit." "None of that salad for me. I hate all that rabbit food." "She's got those teeth just like a rabbit." "Just get it out, honey. Don't rabbit about it



so." "Well, she read that story about PETER RABBIT and she was just terrified of Farmer McGregor. I had to sit up with her that night." "You shut up and be a good little boy or the Easter bunny won't bring you any eggs tomorrow morning." You go home and pop on the tube and there is Bugs Bunny shooting it out with Yosemite Sam and the Trix Bunny trying to get you to eat more cereal. You turn on nostalgic radio and what do you hear? Ray Anthony playing the 'Bunny Hop,' which became a dance craze in the forties.

We quietly accepted the Easter bunny when I was a kid. No one was bothered by a male bunny laying all those eggs. like Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, he just *was*. The rabbits I knew about were those I had seen on the farm in Nebraska. I must have watched my dad and uncle Jack skin hundreds of them after their hunting trips. Coming home at night we saw them in the headlights. They were night feeders and I never saw them in the day time. Seton's Raggybug was a careful little critter. The hawks and owls, foxes, ferrets, and weasels were always after his poor little bones. And he wasn't all that good to eat. Those jacks are so lean, you have to be a fox to want to bite into something like that. The jack rabbit is a hare. It's only the European wild rabbit who is a true rabbit, but Americans seldom say hare. To them, they're all rabbits or bunnies, and the ones seen most often are domestic pets like that poor little character who got stewed in *FATAL ATTRACTION*. There are a lot of differences. Rabbits burrow and hares don't. Hares are born fully-furred and they can see and carry on independently from birth. Rabbits are born naked and blind. They don't have their sight and fur until they are about ten days old. A hare might hide in a burrow once in awhile, but it's one some other animal dug. That's what

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FOR DETAILS

makes old Bugs Bunny a fraud. He's clearly a jackrabbit, old *Iepus Americanus*, but those animators have him living in a hole in the ground. He even eats carrots and hares don't dig for their food. They eat mostly vegetation above ground and when the winter comes they eat the bark from trees, a habit which makes a farmer mad. Hares have longer ears and hind feet. They are bigger, faster, and tougher than rabbits. If Bugs had really been a bunny, he would been *hassenpfeffer* long ago.

Rabbits got into print very early. The first was the hare who appeared in the fables of a Greek slave named Aesop, the one who lost the race to a tortoise. I always got a kick out of that story. James Thurber retold it once the way it would have been. When his hare crossed the finish line, the tortoise had moved about three inches. It was John Tenniel's drawing of Aesop's hare that influenced Charles Ludwidge Dodgson to approach him to do the illustrations for the published version of *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* (1865). That story contrasted the civilized White Rabbit with the wild *March Hare*.

Both hare and tortoise are tricksters in African folk tales, you know. It was Joel Chandler Harris who focussed on Brer Rabbit. Brer Terrapin didn't inspire him much. Many Southwestern Indian tribes think of hare as the creator of the earth. The Great Hare stole fire and brought it to some tribes. There is a rabbit dance which celebrates that event. Most of the folk tales you hear about rabbits from the Indians show an African influence which came from the Southern blacks. Brer Rabbit did and did not influence Beatrix Potter. She knew about the Brer Rabbit stories and even tried to sell some of her illustrations for an edition of the Uncle Remus stories, but her bent was natural history and she told her story about Peter to Noel Moore in 1893 in a way that would show realistic rabbit behavior with an overlay of Victorian sentimentalism. Not too sentimental though. In the first version, Beatrix had Peter's father served in a *pie* to Farmer McGregor by Mrs. McGregor. This part of the story, along with the illustration, was cut from later versions of the tale. Howard Garis and Thornton W. Burgess knew about Peter Rabbit, but neither copied that specific character to any extent. Burgess explained in his autobiography that the success of Potter's bunny had children thinking of all rabbits as Peter, so he simply accepted the name for the character in his nature series. Garis projected himself into Uncle Wiggily, while Burgess, more of a naturalist like Potter, emphasized actual animal behavior. His Peter Rabbit did not drive a car or go ice skating like Uncle Wiggily, although in Cady's comic strip version, Burgess's Peter became more human than rabbit.

In the twentieth century, rabbits infiltrated all kinds of literature and entertainment. The first animated rabbit to gain a reputation was Walt Disney's version of Oswald The Lucky Rabbit (1926-7). Disney failed to copyright him and Oswald wound up working for Carl Laemmle's Universal Studios with Walter Lantz directing (1929). Walt used rabbits in a few Silly Symphonies (*FUNNY LITTLE BUNNIES*, *THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE*, and *TOBY TORTOISE RETURNS*), but he dropped Max Hare rather than build him into a star. Max was the braggart who blew the race to Toby Tortoise in 1935 and he was boosted by Warner Brothers' Termite Terrace crew in 1939. In the next few years, they restyled him into Bugs Bunny, a character named for his first director Bugs Hardaway, though directed mainly by Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, Chuck Jones and Bob McKimson.

The rabbit influence on literature is profound. Poets like John Keats and James Whitcomb Riley and Wallace Stevens have written about the critter and he symbolizes different things to different cultures. Interest in Brer Rabbit

UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG

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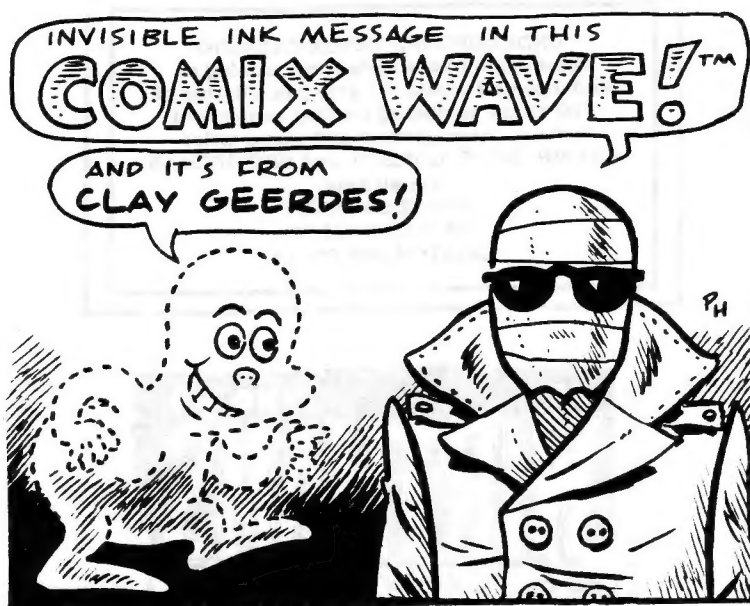
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was revived in 1946 when Walt Disney released his version of the Uncle Remus story as *SONG OF THE SOUTH*. Toni Morrison wrote a novel, *TAR BABY*, which used Brer Rabbit as a symbol of the black slave who escaped the tar baby of white culture. John Updike used this folk background in his trilogy about Rabbit Angstrom in the 1960's (*RABBIT RUN*, *RABBIT REDUX*, and *RABBIT IS RICH*). Robert Lawson was closer to Potter, Burgess, and the other naturalists when he wrote *RABBIT HILL* (1946) and *A TOUGH WINTER* (1954), Both of which influenced Adams' *WATERSHIP DOWN* (1972), While Thomas Sanchez drifted back to Washo Indian lore for his novel *RABBIT BOSS*. Mary Chase's *HARVEY* (originally titled *THE WHITE RABBIT* in 1943), a play about a 6 foot, one and a half inch invisible rabbit, is not really a part of the rabbit world, because Harvey was a pukka and could have been any animal. With the exception of a few superficial details, this is true of nearly all of the rabbits that appear in animated cartoons and comic books. It is less true of children's stories like Steven Cosgrove's *LOP TALES* because the children's writer is more likely to write about actual rabbits than to use the rabbit as a symbol.

The real rabbit goes back millions of years, first appearing in the Oligocene age as *Paleonolagus*, then in the Pliocene as *Hypolagus*. He was originally classed as a rodent (from *rodentia*, meaning to gnaw). He is now placed in the order *Lagomorpha* (hare-shaped) and the family *Leporidae*. Hares belong to the genus *Lepus*. The Chinese made him a member of the Zodiac and every twelfth year is a year of the rabbit. Ancient Chinese saw him in the moon. He was grinding out the elixir of life with a mortar and pestle while seated beneath a cassia tree. Ancient East Indians, looking up at the same moon, saw a running hare. Somehow, in European oral tradition, he became the man in the moon. By the middle ages, the hare was suspected of being a witch's familiar, one of many animal forms witches were suspected of using to accomplish their ends. He continued to be associated with the harvest and was considered a corn spirit.

COMIX PLUGOLA

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INVISIBILITY

I thought about sending out a blank sheet of paper and calling this my invisibility issue, then I thought, no, nobody would get it. I'd just get a lot of letters saying, hey, Clay, jeez, I got a blank one, wouldja send me another copy. Then I thought about writing it with lemon juice, you know, the old invisible ink trip from World War 2 where you have to heat the paper in order to read the coded message, but I *KNEW* that would never work out and I was too lazy to do it anyway, so I guess I'll just have to write about invisibility directly and forget the symbolism. This whole thing was stimulated by H. F. Saint's first novel, **MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN**, which gives a nod here and there to H. G. Wells' **INVISIBLE MAN** (1897), but is far beyond that speculative work in dealing with the real problems inherent in being unseen. Saint's character, Nick, is made invisible in an industrial accident and finds himself hunted by some government heavies who want him for a guinea pig. He can't go back to his own place and he has to develop a lifestyle in line with his new reality. Saint gets into the fantasy in a way Wells never did, because he stays inside his character and deals with the physical problems of being invisible, whereas Wells was more concerned with the metaphysical, turning his Griffin into a power-hungry maniac who saw himself becoming Invisible Man The First, a King. Nick is more down to earth. How do you shave if you can't see your face? How can you get around the streets when people can't see you and are liable to run into you at any moment? How do you eat in public when the food is visible going through your intestines? Where do you live when you can't rent an apartment anywhere or deal with people directly. How do you keep from going crazy with loneliness since you can see people you always know but don't dare talk to them or let them know you are there?

Invisibility was a big deal when I was a kid, because we had just seen the movie or one of its several sequels and we were all having fantasies about being invisible and hanging out in the girl's shower room at the high school or being able to stroll in and out of a grocery store or drugstore carrying anything we wanted, which would have been candy bars and comic books and boxes of cereals with comic character pins in them. It never occurred to us as it does to Nick that those things would have been seen floating through the air and chaos would have resulted.

In the Sunday papers, Russell Stamm's **INVISIBLE**



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SCARLET O'NEILL could disappear just by rubbing her wrist with her fingertips. Clothes and all, she was gone. There is a character who must have made the colorist happy. All they did with Scarlet was leave out the color when she was invisible. Walter Gibson's **SHADOW** was not an invisible man. He was merely one who could hypnotize one or more people into thinking he was invisible. Gibson gave him the power to "cloud men's minds so that they could not see him." **THE SHADOW** was a detective and he worked with a woman named Margo Lane. Man-woman teams were popular during this period and **THE SHADOW** led to Nick and Nora Charles in **THE THIN MAN** series written by Dashiell Hammett and to Perry Mason and Della Street in Erle Stanley Gardner's still-running series about a lawyer and his secretary.

On screen, Jon Hall unwrapped the bandages from his face and there was nothing there. Drinking glasses and cigarettes floated through the air and furniture tipped over and you knew it was because he was on the scene. Henry George Wells wrote the story of the first invisible man in 1897 and it was onscreen by the 1930s. Once the guys in Hollywood learned how to do all those special effects, there were more magic characters up there than you could shake a stick at. There were Angels and ghosts all over the place, but we never thought about the actual experience of being invisible until Saint came along and wrote his **MEMOIRS OF AN INVISIBLE MAN**. We just thought it would be neat to be able to see other people without their being able to see us. We forgot that we wouldn't be able to see our own hands or feet and even Saint doesn't work out the problem of how a man with invisible eyes can see anything, though he works out most of the other logistics.

MEMOIRS is a well-written study of alienation. Invisibility is really a metaphor for our time, since most of us have experienced it in our over-populated cities where we tend to drift into anonymity as soon as we hit the sidewalk. I had a strange experience some years ago when I was in Canada. I was walking into the zoo when the gates opened and hundreds of people started to come out. Nothing unusual about that except that *not a single one of those people made eye contact with me, not even for a second*. I felt completely invisible. It was as though I didn't exist at all. In the United States, we are used to making eye contact on the street, and it never occurred to me that there were places where that didn't happen. After awhile I got used to it, but I still felt a bit uncomfortable. This is why I understand Nick's experience

so well. Most of the experiences that keep us human involve other people being able to see us and to read our facial expressions and watch our body language.

MEMOIRS would be just another thriller if it were not for the emotional level of the book. That Nick is hunted maintains the tension, but it is what he does to re-establish his life, to invent a new identity, that holds the reader's interest. Nick is a securities analyst and his knowledge of the stock market coupled with his access to inner office secrets enables him to create a new identity and make that identity rich. He visits the offices of various brokers and wheeler dealers and finds out the inside dope on the latest buyout and takeover scams, then he takes advantage of them by buying some of the critical stock at the right time. That Nick is not a detective out to solve some mystery and capture a stock villain enhances this novel; we do not need another Shadow or Nick Carter. I was a bit troubled that Alice accepted Nick so easily and I found the woman who screamed when she discovered she was in bed with an invisible man more realistic, but it's hard to be critical of one aspect of a complete fantasy while you accept the rest. It's like learning the rules of a game and being upset when someone chooses to change one of them mid-game. Nick meets Alice at a party and she thinks he is a ghost, but they go to her place and Nick winds up wintering there. She is at first incredulous, then fascinated, then simply accepting of her invisible fiance. The climax is very well done and I think you'll like the ending which I'll leave undisturbed for you as a good writer should.

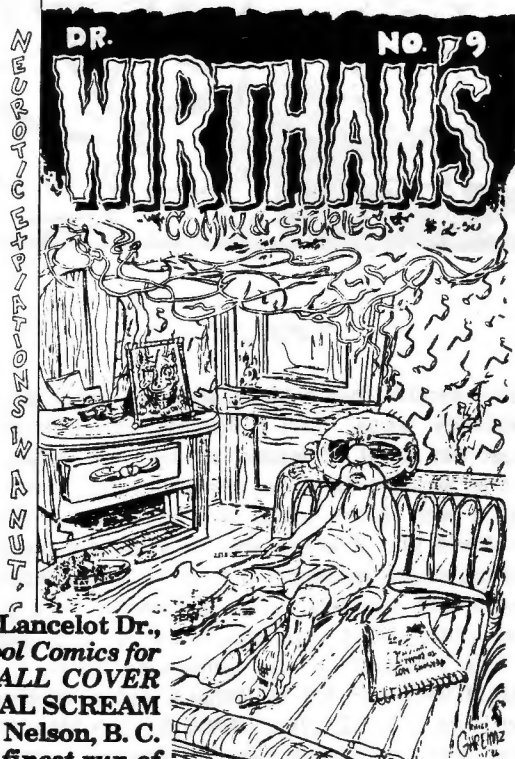
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POCKET COMICS 1-3 for a buck/.39 stamp from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Dr., North Salt Lake, Utah 84050.* *Get the latest catalog from High School Comics for an SASE, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN. Their newest is ALL ALL COVER COMICS #1. ODD STORIES, TRUE BARBARIAN TALES, and REAL SCREAM COMICS go for 1.50/.39 each from Mike Culpepper, 808 Stanley St., Nelson, B. C. VIL IN7. From Renegade, ROSCOE 4, WORDSMITH 12, and the finest run of Sherlock Holmes yet drawn. Dan Day's series is up to #11.* More Graphic Poetry in PUMA BLUES 14 from Aardvark-Vanaheim. S. CLAY WILSON will be signing autographs and hanging out with The Checkered Demon Band on April 1 at Russell Ketter's newly opened RATHER RIPPED RECORDS, 1975 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, Ca 94704. 848-5900. This year's SAN DIEGO COMICON is August 4-7. Information from POB 17066, San Diego, CA 92117.* Two new issues of Clifford Neal's DR. WIRTHAM'S COMIX AND STORIES, 378 Judson, Mystic, CT 06355. \$3.50 pp each. Good sex art from Neal, Watson, and others. Keeping the E-C tradition alive.* *In case you missed it, Hunt Emerson has illustrated LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER. Mellors greets the lady in the panels below. Ask your dealer about this one. I suspect Last Gasp distributes it in this country.**



UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG
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DORI SEDA 1951-1988

Underground cartoonist Dori Seda died on February 26, 1988. WIMMEN'S COMIX #13 will be dedicated to her.

NOTE / TOM BERGER HAS ON BEING INVISIBLE! I JUST SAW IT, C.G.



HORATIO ALGER

There are names you hear all the time and some of them you know right away and some you think you ought to know but don't and others you are curious enough about to look up in a reference book, but what you ought to know after looking at enough encyclopedias and other reference works is that these books seldom contain the truth; indeed, most of them contain biased, censored, and whitewashed versions of reality; they are, en fin, what someone at some time wanted the rest of the culture to accept as true. Horatio Alger fits neatly into this category, being the 'father of the American dream.' When people hear his name, they think of ordinary newsboys striving and succeeding in their efforts to go from rags to riches. You can almost see those true-blue, clean-living, pure-minded young saints marching down the glory road bearing the banner of benevolent capitalism.

And the first biography of Alger, that one made up by Herbert Mayes in 1928, the one used as a critical source by John Tebbel for *FROM RAGS TO RICHES* and John Gardner for *HORATIO ALGER AND THE AMERICAN DREAM*, catered to this notion of Alger as the great-granddaddy of Eagle Scout consciousness in America. People believed Mayes because he had become editor of *GOOD HOUSEKEEPING*, a director of *SATURDAY REVIEW*, and finally President of the McCall Corporation. Only Malcolm Cowley was curious about the lack of documentation in Mayes. It was not until Edwin P. Hoyt went back to the town and newspaper records and did the basic research on Horatio Alger, Jr. that the truth about this writer of boy's books was finally made public. You'll find the documented evidence in *HORATIO'S BOYS: THE LIFE AND WORKS OF HORATIO ALGER, JR.* [Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1974].

Alger has a lot in common with Charles Ludwigg Dodgson. Both were born in 1832. Both had their first successful books published in 1865, *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* and *PAUL PRESCOTT'S CHARGE* respectively. Both were the sons of ministers and while Dodgson never took his vows, Horatio Jr. graduated from Harvard in 1851 and became a Unitarian minister like his Daddy. Both were physically small. Alger was 5 foot 2 and weighed about 130 pounds. He wore a moustache and his hair thinned early. Both stammered as boys. Alger did not talk until he was six years old. Though he was the second child, he was sickly and immature and never played the role of older brother in his family, though he was later to play that role with a number of his boy friends. Dodgson was suspected of being a pedophile, mainly because of his interest in and photography of pre-pubescent girls, but there is no

evidence in his diaries on letters or, indeed, in any of his correspondence with others, that he ever acted on his desire for young girls. A man who grew up with a large number of little sisters for which he cared and for whom he made up little plays, Dodgson simply continued his boyhood behavior into his mature years, using his *ALICE* books to make friends of little girls. Indeed, when he heard the rumors about himself, he quit his photography hobby entirely. He died in 1898, a year before Alger.

Horatio Alger, Jr., on the other hand was not only accused of pederasty with young boys, but was caught at it. He did not proclaim his innocence, rather he confessed to his indiscretion, resigned his position as minister of the Unitarian Church of Brewster, Massachusetts, and left town that very night in 1866 for fear that some of the members of his outraged congregation might lynch him. Hoyt put it this way: *Thomas Crocker, Elisha Bangs and Moderator Gould came in with the dreadful report. Crocker had started [his investigation] at home with his own son, Thomas S. Crocker, and from him had learned that the Reverend Mr. Alger had been bugging him. Not only him, but John Clark, too, and perhaps there were others. The shocked senior Crocker wished to go no further. We learn from John Clark and Thomas S. Crocker that Horatio Alger, Jr. has been practicing on them at different times deeds that are too revolting to relate* (5). Confronted by the committee from his church, Alger confessed that he had been 'imprudent.' Reverend Alger added that *under the circumstances he considered his connection with the Unitarian Society of Brewster to be dissolved.*

Adds Hoyt: *The fact is that even in his college days, Horatio was tutoring young boys, and whatever his relationships with them in that period, there is no hint anywhere in what is known of his life that he ever looked at a girl, except his sister, and that in a most brotherly way* (21).

To please his father, Alger attended Harvard Divinity School in 1847. He lived on campus and earned his room and board by running errands for the president Edward Everett. Alger rebelled against his father's strictness and would often sneak out of prayers to go into Boston and enjoy the night life. His first publication was an article on chivalry in the *Pictorial National Library* in Boston. He showed his literary bent quite early, writing about everything. He even wrote an article entitled *THE IMMORTALITY OF BOOT SOLES*, not to mention a sentimental little poem called "The Death of Little Alice." He graduated with Phi Beta Kappa with honors in 1851 and gave the English oration at his graduation.

Alger's fame has a lot to do with a chance meeting between himself and William Taylor Adams. Adams

wrote boy's stories under the name Oliver Optic. An ardent opponent of strong drink, he came to Marlborough to preach against the demon rum, met Alger, read some of his stories, and suggested he might find a publisher for them. Adams took Alger's material to Brown, Bazin, and Co. in Boston and they published Alger's first book, *BERTHA'S CHRISTMAS VISION*. But the book in which Alger found his formula was *PAUL PRESCOTT'S CHARGE* in 1865, a Civil War story. Adams was hired as editor of *STUDENT AND SCHOOLMATE*, becoming Alger's literary supporter and guru. Many of Alger's early books were first serialized in this magazine, then reprinted as books.

Alger went to New York after his ministerial indiscretion and established himself there. He now considered himself a professional writer. He took his subject matter from the streets and it was always credible and realistic, however stretched his melodramatic plots. As Hoyt noted, *RAGGED DICK* was a very thorough and direct guide to the places and people of New York City in the year 1866, and for that reason if no other it approached the realm of literature, a claim that will doubtless be gainsaid by critics (78). In *RAGGED DICK* [One of the few Alger books you will find in your bookstore in 1988], Alger chronicled the everyday life of the middle and lower class in the city in a way it had not been done before (79). Alger said it was right to be decent, honest, reasonable, scrupulous and moral, but what really counted was luck. This was the essence of the Alger formula. A young boy having a tough time of it on the streets would be standing on a corner when the daughter of a banker fell in front of a carriage. The boy would save her from the horses' hooves and he would be rewarded with thirty years behind a desk in the bank. That was rags to riches. Oh, sometimes the boy married the girl, in which case, he really got rich, but usually his climb up the ladder was one from the street into the office. *RAGGED DICK* was a best seller in 1867 after running as a serial in *STUDENT AND SCHOOLMATE*. Alger was doing in America what Dickens had done in England. The main difference was that Alger was locked into a juvenile market, while Dickens had an adult readership. Horatio was never able to make the transition though he did try several adult novels. Both Dickens and Alger were popular writers in their time, both serialized their work, but many of Dickens' novels are now considered literary classics, while all of Alger's are considered hack work.

A philanthropist named Charles Loring Brace, upset by the thousands of homeless boys on the streets of New York, started an association to help them. In the 1860s, the Newsboys' Lodging House was at 49 Park Place and in 1869, Brace recorded that 8,835 different boys had lived in the house for various periods. Alger got to know Brace and Brace introduced him to the Newsboy scene. Alger used the boys as a source for his books. He kept a bed there and often slept there. Supplementing his income by tutoring a couple of wealthy children, Alger's routine circa 1872 was to write three books a year. He would live part of the time in his own apartment, part at the Newsboys' and spend the rest of his time at the mansion. He played fairy godfather to the boys, helping them with their problems, finding some of them jobs, sending some to school, giving entertainments and parties for them, sending them out to the country or paying their fare to places where jobs had been found for them (121). Having learned his lesson in Brewster, Alger was now discreet and there is no further evidence of any misbehavior with young boys. Indeed, there is more evidence that Alger redeemed himself.



While he continued to exploit the boys by using their stories as his subject matter, he spent a lot of the royalties helping the boys get jobs, getting them out of the city, paying for their educations, buying them clothes so they could make a decent appearance at job interviews. Wherever Alger went, he always took a couple of boys with him, but, said Hoyt, *there was no hint of scandal* (215).

Alger developed a successful formula for boy's fiction. He and his publishers knew what young American boys wanted. A boy hero, plenty of adventure, little or no discussion of girls, some good rugged violence, events turning against the bullies and villains, the land and loan sharks, and wealth, if not fame, to the young hero. Alger did write a couple of books aimed at girls, but sales figures revealed their lack of interest. Edward Stratemeyer, who was go to on to create the Rover Boys and the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew, was a fan of Alger's style. Indeed, when Alger died of an asthma attack at Old Orchard Beach on July 18, 1899, Ed finished several of his manuscripts. In the 1930s and 40s, librarians decided Alger's books were trash and most of them were thrown out of the libraries. They are seriously collected today and it is rare to see a first edition although most antique stores have a few of the Donahue reprints sitting around. The rarest Alger is *TIMOTHY CRUMP'S WARD*, which is valued at \$1,000. The Brandeis University has the Max Goldberg Collection. The collector should consult John Gardner's *HORATIO ALGER AND THE AMERICAN DREAM*, which contains a complete listing of the various editions of Alger's more than 135 books.

BABYFAT 60

Art by Par Holman, David Miller, Valentino, Ric Sloane and Brad Foster.

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CRUMB KEEPS ON ON-ING

While the media gave underground comix a reputation for sex and violence, it was actually the artists' movement toward realism and personal honesty that distinguished undergrounds from their earlier predecessors. One may follow the history of Robert Crumb from his first *ZAP* to the current issue of *WEIRDO* [21, from Last Gasp Comix]. If there is anything he has not confessed about his own past and behavior, one need only wait awhile and he'll get to it. In the latest *WEIRDO*, Crumb published a group of sketches dealing with his difficulties with women, his penchant for strange and unusual sex, and his problems as a parent. C.G.

Drawings © R. Crumb, 1988.



UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG

Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. \$1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrowns' and major titles.

CRUMB, BODÉ, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.

BRUCE SWEENEY
85 WALTHAM #5
BOSTON, MA 02118

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CLAY GEERDES'

COMIX WAVE

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THE WRITING FANTASY

I just bought a copy of that wish-fulfillment fantasy for writers, the **WRITER'S MARKET**. I love this book because it holds out such hope for the novice and so many laughs for the working freelancer. Thousands of magazines are listed and the newcomer, I'm sure, gets that glowing mixture of success and greed just reading through all those company comments. Some of these magazines buy nearly all of their material out of the mail! Astounding. Some pay almost as much now as they were paying back in 1910. No intelligent writer is going to do anything for 2 or 3 cents a word in 1988; indeed, the effort isn't worth it for less than a couple hundred; after all, these magazine sharks are now telling all of us to get professional and use word processors, but the average freelancer out here isn't making the kind of money needed to invest in a word processor with all of its programs and accessories. I feel sorry for the poor geniuses like Ernest Hemingway who had to type their stuff on old Smith-Corona standards. Or guys like Dickens who actually had to write everything out in longhand. Do you realize that Tolstoy wrote **WAR AND PEACE** in longhand? Ah, there was dedication in those days.

Well, let's drift behind the scenes and see what really happens in the publishing world. Let's sneak into the office of **SLOPPY HOUSEKEEPING** on a typical Monday morning. The new **WRITER'S MARKET** has just come out and there are eleven sacks of mail being dumped and sorted in the mail room. This mail is broken down into the usual departments and divisions. The unreadable addresses scribbled in pencil are put aside. The mangled manuscripts that have been torn open and spilled in the bottom of the sack are carefully removed and set aside. By mid-morning, part of the mail will reach the offices of various editors. Let's go into the office of the Articles Editor. It's about eleven now and she's back from her

coffee break. Her head is clearing from the weekend cocktail parties and she confronts the mail. She may have several hundred or more envelopes on her blotter, all of them commanding her attention with rubber stamps like **IMPORTANT** and **PERSONAL**, but the mail on her desk consists only of those letters and manila envelopes addressed to her personally. The rest of the mail is still on the desk of an assistant or an assistant to that assistant, there being in the publishing world a hierarchy as complex and impenetrable as that of the Post Office itself. The Articles Editor begins to plow through the stack, separating names she knows from those she doesn't, contract authors from strangers, personal buddies from clients. If you sent your article to her by name, it may be in this stack or in one that will appear on her desk in the next month. If you simply sent it to the magazine, it may get to her within the year if you are lucky. If you specified that your piece was an article and not a story, not fiction, it might get to her eventually, but by the time it does you will have long forgotten about it. Or you will have sent several frustrating letters that have been dealt with by an assistant. The sight of the average slush pile would terrify most novice freelancers.

The Articles Editor goes through her personal mail first, just like you do at home. She laughs at the lively accounts of her children's petty problems as European exchange students, scowls at a terse businesslike note from a superior about something she forgot to do a week ago, makes some notes about an article that might work in the Summer Fashion Special, grimaces at the phraseology in an article by a writer who is a friend of the Associate Editor, someone *she* would reject out of hand, but has to accept and flatter because of the powers that be. And, lo and behold, it's lunchtime. She gets up and leaves the mess behind, to return around two. Back at the desk, she spends much of her afternoon on the telephone and the rest dictating notes to contract authors and jotting short replies to her personal friends. She will take the manila envelopes sent in by people she recognizes home where she can concentrate on them without interruption, protected by her answering machine. The material sent by outsiders, unknowns, will remain in a pile which will get larger and larger as the week progresses, until one day it will be taken to the desk of an assistant where it will sit until that assistant has it taken to the desk of another assistant on its way to oblivion.

Some of the first-class query letters will be looked at and one out of perhaps a thousand may be answered with a note of interest. After all, those on the inside at the magazine are going to get what space there is. Our Articles Editor is a writer herself. She took the job because it was a position where she could promote her own writing. She has no interest in promoting some stranger from Illinois. When there is a hole in the magazine, some space up for grabs, She will use that space to promote herself or a friend. Many editors write articles for their own magazines, using false names, so they can pad their income. If things run smoothly, the publisher may never know about these moonlighters. If he cares. Often when a good idea comes in through the mail, it will be xeroxed, and a form rejection slip sent to the contributor. The article then remains in a file for awhile. This file is farmed by those who work on the inside. It is easy to have a flunky type it into a word processor and hand over the disc. Then strange things begin to happen to this article. The location is changed, the names of some of the people and their activities are shifted around, and the emphasis is shifted here and there—behold, a new article! It runs under one of the editor's pseudonyms and no one is ever the wiser. Even if a writer *did* read all of the contents of every issue

of all the magazines he submitted to, he might not recognize his own piece in its remodelled format. And what if he did? He can't prove anything. He can write the same kind of angry letter he might write if his check never came, but what is he going to do? Fly to New York from his home state, hire a lawyer, spend thousands of dollars over what would be at best a few hundred dollars? In a time when we are all reading and watching many of the same events, it is only logical to realize that many of us who write will come up with similar ideas. Popular writers always write variations or improvisations on certain basic themes. How many articles will we see on Sex and Evangelism this year? Hundreds.

The intelligent freelancer knows he has a much better chance with local publications and small magazines or tabloids than with the majors where most of the work is assigned. **SLOPPY HOUSEKEEPING**, like all the majors deals in major themes and celebrities and celebrity writers. The contents are determined by a group of editors, all of whom are promoting themselves and their personal stable of writer contacts. The issues are usually thematic, and even if you did send in the perfect slant on their theme, they would want it written *by the authority in the field or by one of their names*. Of course, they would like to have that occasional blockbuster story from *out there*, but that is the exception in publishing, not the rule. When that moment comes up, be it Watergate or Irangate or Anyothergate, if *you* have the exclusive story, *they* will call you. Sending it through the mail would be futile since the moment would be long past before anyone saw the idea.

Lots of novice writers have the idea that creativity and originality are positive qualities they should shoot for, but the truth is quite different. If our Articles Editor *did* receive a truly original idea in the mail, she wouldn't recognize it. How could she? It would relate to nothing in her experience. Suppose it were a scientific breakthrough. How would she know it was anything new unless the authorities in that field said it was? And if it were the work of a single individual, those authorities wouldn't know it either. They would have to read the research and study it all out for themselves before they could comment one way or another, and they wouldn't do that because all of them would be working in their own areas and they wouldn't have the time or inclination to discontinue their own research in order to check out a strange new idea by a colleague. If he can prove his theory and get it accepted; in other words, if it sells, they will eventually accept it as a useful theory. If it doesn't sell, they will forget about it as they have forgotten about the thousands of other breakthroughs that have taken place over the years. A new idea is almost impossible to sell. Magazine editors claim to want creativity and originality, but that is the last thing they want. They have what they want as any reader knows. The magazine has the same format and content each month, the same company image, the one that pleases the corporate advertisers and keeps the money coming in and the copies going off the newsstands. If **COSMOPOLITAN** were to shift size and format and print a socially relevant or political event on the cover instead of the standard model in her absurd pose, the teenaged women who buy the magazine wouldn't buy it. They wouldn't recognize it. They would think this was some other magazine masquerading as **COSMO**. A **COSMOPOLITAN** in **MOTHER JONES'** drag. Every successful popular magazine is a consumer product and it has to look the same every month just like your box of Kix or your carton of Yogurt. It's a conservative form, one that depends on sameness in order to appeal to the repetition compulsion of the habitual buyer. To sell the popular magazines, you must be one of those people who can rewrite the same old malarky

again and again for the same buyers. You must be glib, not creative. You must make the mundane *seem* original and fresh to the jaded editor who has to spend forty hours a week or more reading that drivel about relationships and political issues and designer drugs.

What is our Articles Editor reading as she sits in her \$1100 a month hole in the wall in Manhattan? Stories about funny people who do funny things in small town America, about favorite cats and dogs, about local folk singers and drugstore celebrities who are going to New York or Hollywood and make the big time some day, about petty quarrels among neighbors. Every one thinks his or her story is worth an article or a story or a book and with the advent of cheap word processors more and more of these stories will be written by bored people with time on their hands and our Articles Editor will see her share of this tedious material, because that is her destiny.

The **WRITER'S MARKET** is a nice fantasy and I enjoy it. I am sure that someone out there is writing an article for some obscure Horse Lovers magazine right this minute, secure in the thought that he or she will get a by-line and a check and be launched on the way to the Phil Donahue Show. Well, it ain't me, babe.

It ain't me.

CLAY GEERDES



What a shame about Dori Seda! I thought her work was absolutely first rate. Though she's pretty much part of the *underground* generation agewise, I always thought of her as one of the best of the new talents. Bodé, Murphy, Sheridan, Hayes, Irons, Brand, and now Seda. I'm not old enough to have my culture heroes pass at such a rate.

SCOTT SEMANS

SAN DIEGO COMICON

This year's San Diego Comicon will take place August 4-7. I'll be attending on the weekend. Among the guests are Jules Feiffer and Mort Drucker. See you there. C. G.

CLAY GEERDES' - COMIX WAVE



SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS (1835-1910)

Born in Florida, Missouri, on November 30, 1835, Samuel Langhorne Clemens grew up on Hill Street in Hannibal, Missouri, where his family moved in 1839. He was working as a job printer in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1857, when he decided to quit and go on the river. By September of 1858, he was a licensed river pilot. He named himself Mark Twain after working as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi River. The phrase Mark Twain means that all is clear ahead, just what a pilot likes to hear from the man taking the soundings. I visited Hannibal in April of 1988 and found the street Clemens grew up on closed to traffic and turned into a cobblestoned tourist attraction. On one side was the small white house with green-trimmed windows Clemens lived in around 1843. Next to it was a stone museum containing some of his things. There was an old writing table and a typewriter. Twain was one of the first American writers to use a typewriter for his manuscripts. There were 16 original Norman Rockwell paintings on the wall, most of them **SATURDAY EVENING POST** covers. The rooms in the house had been set up with furniture from the period of Clemens' youth in the 1840's. Tourists could put on headphones and hear recorded stories from Clemens' books, mostly anecdotes about Tom Sawyer who was based on Clemens and his boyhood friends. Clemens attributed many of the colorful things others did to Tom Sawyer, making the Tom and Huck books a composite of actual incidents from his childhood. Across the street diagonally from the Clemens house was the home of Becky Thatcher, now a bookstore on the lower floor. Upstairs, a few rooms were preserved along with a more than life-sized figure of Becky in a white dress, standing there forever to greet the tourists ogling her in that glass-enclosed bedroom.

On the way to Hannibal from St. Louis, a woman we were travelling with was complaining about our not having a map. Preferring to explore for myself, I've never been much of a map person, and I told her I suspected we would find Mark Twain's name on just about everything in town. I was right, of course. There was the Mark Twain Hotel, Mark Twain Wax Museum, a fried chicken place, even the frozen yogurt place near the bronze statue of Huck and Tom that looked out over the main street was called Mark Twain's World. We climbed the steps up Cardiff Hill to the lighthouse. I reached the top ahead of the women and started laughing, because the first thing I saw was a white park bench. On the back of it, some contemporary Huck Finn had sprayed **FUCK YOU** in black letters. That was our humorous welcome to the lighthouse. The building itself had never been used and had no light inside. It was built as a memorial to Twain for

the centennial and was dedicated about 1937. We looked out over the Mississippi River. No rafts out there now. A native came along and told us about the town, how the shoe factories that supported it were gone now and the population was down to about 18,000. He asked me if I had heard the song **WABASH CANNON BALL** and pointed past the lighthouse to a bridge where the train used to cross. I had forgotten the Wabash Cannon Ball *was* a train. We walked back down the hill and looked for a place to eat lunch. On an off street we found Virginia's Place and went inside. We put a couple of tables together and looked at the menu. A Buffalo fish dinner was only \$2.50! The prices were amazing to us, because everything in California is so high. You do not eat out for \$2.50. Even junk food is higher. The three of us had enormous meals and the check was less than \$10. The food was great and the women who cooked it were friendly. It was like having dinner with family. The ladies apologized for not having catfish, but no one brought it in that day. Their fish is caught in the river by local people and all along the Mississippi catfish seems to be the favorite. We saw signs advertising it everywhere. In St. Louis, the fast food chains have bought old riverboats, paddle-wheelers, and moored them on the levee where they sell french fries and micro-burgers to the tourists. You can ride on the river for an hour on the *Tom Sawyer* if the mood hits you or ride up in the Arch that celebrates St. Louis as the Gateway to the West. We decided to do that and it was really a strange experience. There is an elaborate elevator system inside the arch, a string of eight modules, each of which holds five people. This means 40 people make the four minute ride to the top at a time while 40 others are descending. If you're at all claustrophobic, this would terrify you. Think of a bathysphere and you've got it. All you can see out the tiny windows in the door are cables and concrete walls. At the top the doors open and you go up some steps into the viewing area. The windows there are small and people lean over to look out at St. Louis on one side and the Mississippi River on the other. After you've looked around and taken your pictures you line up for the three minute ride back to the lobby museum.

I suspect all that tourist hoopla would make Sam Clemens a little sick to his tummy. Though he told part of his life story in **LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI**, he only allowed his **AUTOBIOGRAPHY** to be published after his death. He wrote it mostly in 1906 and he died in 1910. It's one of the saddest books I ever read, filled with heartache. It's also a book filled with anecdotes about the people he met along the way. Clemens' river days ended in 1861 when the Civil war started. He took off for the west with his brother, Orion and wound up in Carson City, Nevada. By 1862, he was writing for a living as a reporter for the **TERRITORIAL ENTERPRISE** in Virginia City, Nevada. In 1864, he moved to San Francisco to work for the **CALL**. Always on the move in those days, he was gold mining in 1865 when the war ended and by 1866 was in the Sandwich Islands in Hawaii sending dispatches back to the Sacramento **UNION**. In 1867, he headed for New York by way of Nicaragua, started lecturing regularly, and published his version of the **CELEBRATED JUMPING FROG OF CALAVERAS CREEK**. He refers to 1867 as the last year he really worked for a living. He always enjoyed writing and didn't consider it work. Like Frank Baum, he loved being on stage and didn't consider it labor either. For a short time, he was secretary to Senator Stewart of Nevada in Washington, DC. In 1869, he worked for the **BUFFALO EXPRESS**. He married Olivia Langdon in 1870 and moved to Hartford, Connecticut in 1871 before going to Europe for a visit. His life changed radically when he married Livy. Her father was a wealthy man and from the time of their

marriage Clemens began to live in luxury with his own mansions and servants. In 1876, his fame was secured with **THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER**, and he began the write the **HUCKLEBERRY FINN** sequel. As with **TOM SAWYER**, he hit a dry spell with **HUCK** and put the book aside. It wasn't completed until 1884. At first Clemens was bothered when he ran dry in the middle of a book. It happened with **TOM SAWYER**. Half the book was finished and he ran dry for two years before taking up the manuscript and finishing it. After awhile, however, he realized this was natural for him, that he would lose interest at a certain point and just have to wait until his unconscious worked out the problem before he could go back and finish off the book. In 1895, Clemens lectured all over the world and by 1900 he was in England arguing copyright law before the House of Lords. His view was that a writer and his heirs should own the rights to a work forever, that a literary work was property and should be protected the same as any other property. Clemens visited Hannibal for the last time in 1902, the year he was given an honorary doctorate from the University of Missouri. Livy died in 1904. He gave her credit for editing many of his manuscripts. In 1907, he was given an honorary doctorate from Oxford in England where he had been a celebrity since the publication of **THE INNOCENTS ABROAD** (1868). When he died on April 21, 1910, Mark Twain was one of the most famous Americans ever known. Clemens had created the character of Mark Twain on stages all over the world and he was more proud of his ability to deal with his live audiences than he ever was with his books. In his autobiography, he trivializes the humor in his books and would, I am sure, rather be remembered as a sage or social philosopher. Fact is, though, reading Twain's **AUTOBIOGRAPHY**, one realizes that he was the consummate hypocrite, spending most of his time with the super-rich, the oil barons and bankers, men like Henry Huttleston Rogers who saved him after his bankruptcy and helped him to become wealthier than ever. Sam Clemens was always the sucker during his life, the guy who fell for get-rich-quick schemes like those of the Duke and the Dauphin in **HUCK FINN**. His judgment of character was terrible when it came to hiring people to work with him in his various publishing and business ventures. It was his know-nothing nephew who bankrupted the firm he started to publish his own books, and had it not been for Rogers, Clemens would have ended up without any of his copyrights and stone broke.

Clemens was the master of the aphorism, the anecdote, the short story, but he could not sustain the longer narrative and what distinguishes his work today is the childrens' books he wrote, not his attempts at historical romance. **THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER** pales in comparison with **A TALE OF TWO CITIES** and **A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT** doesn't really measure up to, say, H. G. Wells' **THE TIME MACHINE**, though it is more fun to read than Edward Bellamy's **LOOKING BACKWARD**. As Mark Twain, Clemens was famous and had a commanding and lasting presence on stage. He would have revelled in television as much as Walt Disney did and I think it is appropriate that the riverboat in Disneyland is named for him. Samuel L. Clemens, on the other hand, was a troubled and unhappy man much of his life, one who had seen too much tragedy. He blamed himself for the death of his firstborn son when the boy died of exposure to the cold after a ride with his father. Clemens became preoccupied with his own thoughts and did not notice that the blanket had fallen off the two year old child. Sam's favorite brother, Henry, died in a steamboat explosion in 1848 at the age of 20. All his early life as a writer, he was ripped off by various

publishers. His experience of the world is well reflected in **LETTERS TO THE EARTH, THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER, THE MAN WHO CORRUPTED HADLEYBURG**, and other works, most of which were published after his death. Mark Twain was the public funnyman everyone loved, but Sam Clemens, the private man, was an unhappy cynic who held his fellow man in low esteem and many of his fellow writers in even lower esteem. If Sam Clemens is one of your idols, best leave his **AUTOBIOGRAPHY** unread.

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COMIX PLUGOLA

SCREAMING DEATH is 35¢ pp from Ed Huyck, 16389 Gladiola Ave., Rosemont, MN 55068.* **SHAMAN 50** is 75¢ pp from William Dockery, 3226-A River Ave., Columbus, GA 31904.* **FAN'TOONS 22** is \$1.75 pp from Edd Vick, 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105.* Scott Stevens has two new ones: **MR. FIX AND HIS SNOWCONE PROGNOSTICATOR** and **MR. FIX AND THE KIDDIE SHOW**. Both for 1.80 pp. 2725 Franklin, #1211, Mesquite, TX 75150. **UNDERGROUND SURREALIST MAGAZINE 3** is \$2.85 pp from Mick Cusimano, POB 2565, Cambridge, MA 02238.* Four issues of the Haight-Ashbury poetry and comics tabloid for \$10 from 1943 Page St., #2, San Francisco, CA 94117. Art by Spain, Steve Lafler, and others.* **THUNDERBUNNY** ends with #12, but I suspect the character will return one day.* **CEREBUS** continues with #109. **THE PUMA BLUES** is in it's 16th issue. from Aardvark-Vanahelm.* Dan Day's beautifully drawn series of **SHERLOCK HOLMES** continues with #12 from Renegade Press. Brad Foster's **MECHTHINGS 4** is out.* **EL VIBORA 98** is \$7 from J. M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3.08003, Barcelona, Spain.* The San Francisco **EXAMINER's** **IMAGE MAGAZINE** ran an article entitled **ZAP TURNS 20** by Warren Hinkle III on April 17, 1988. Photos of Crumb, Spain, Moscoso, et al., but the article is mostly about Dori Seda.* Rather Ripped Records has moved to Oakland. Russell Ketter opened across the street from the Grand Theater at 3237 Grand. 415-839-1703. I'm told the prices are too high, but this is a source for those who collect sixties records.* Bill Ward, who created Torchy, has some t-shirts for sale. SASE for details from him at Box 413, Roselle, NJ 07203.* **GREAT VICTORIAN NOVELS REVISITED: Charlotte M. Yonge's THE DAISY CHAIN (1856)**. You might also want to take a look at **CHRISTIE'S OLD ORGAN (1875)** by Mrs. O. F. Walton. Why don't they ever reprint stuff like this?

CLAY GEERDES

UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG
Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. \$1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrown' and major titles. CRUMB, BODÉ, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.
BRUCE SWEENEY
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THE QUINTESSENCE OF MOOMINISM

Tove Jansson has done a fresco for a publishers' building in Helsinki and is now engaged in painting murals for a big restaurant there. Her father's sculptures may be seen in several Finnish towns, including Helsinki. Her mother is a well-known caricaturist as well as a designer of stamps. Miss Jansson has a large studio in Helsinki which is littered with designs for enormous murals, frescoes and all the paraphernalia of an artist. This studio is the centre of Helsinki's artistic community. Artists, writers, and the leading actors and actresses from the Finnish and Swedish theatres meet there for long discussions which sometimes extend far into the night. They sing songs in many languages and dance national dances. During these nights there is a Moomin atmosphere in Miss Jansson's studio. For months in the summer she lives alone on a small island in a small house built by her brother and herself. There is no post, no telephone, no wireless, only a small rowing boat in which Miss Jansson fetches her water and food from the nearest island a mile or more away. Sometimes rough seas will keep her imprisoned on her island for weeks on end, but she is never lonely. Her constant companions are the Moomin family, the Hattifatteners, and all those other fascinating characters which have enchanted the readers of Miss Jansson's books. She loves to escape to her island where she says she can view civilisation quietly and objectively through the eyes of the kindly Moomins.

A friend told me about the Moomins and the world created for them by Finnish artist Tove Jansson. He had most of the books and had read them to his daughter as she was growing up. He sent me a book containing a large collection of her comic strips which had run in the London Evening News between 1954 and 1968. I read through the material and was impressed by Jansson's exquisite rapidograph illustrations. The drawings reminded me of the work of Palmer Cox and William Donahey. Except for the ears and long tail, the Moomin looks like a miniature hippopotamus. The patriarch of this micro-family is Moominpappa who is

involved in writing his memoirs in *THE EXPLOITS OF MOOMINPAPPA*. He is an orphan who has run away and established his own home. The baby of the family is Moomintroll. He woke up one winter when everyone else was in hibernation and had a tough time finding anything to do though he did encounter a lot of the winter creatures seldom seen by Moomins. Sniff is Moomintroll's pal. He looks a little bit like a mouse with kangaroo ears, but not much. Snufkin, Groke, the Hemulen, Thingummy and Bob, and the other creatures that people Jansson's landscape are loosely defined and retain their freedom to be or do just about anything that should occur in the episodic plots of the books. Snufkin is a little man with a feather in his hat who plays a mouth organ. The Hemulen is a male creature who wears a cloak or dress and is the leading Moomin Philatelist. The Muskrat is a philosopher who sleeps all day in a hammock in the Moomins' garden. The Hattifatteners are deaf mute tube-like creatures. The Moomins, who began their existence in *COMET IN MOOMINLAND* in 1946, are totally unpredictable. They live in Moomin Valley in Moominland where everyone does what he likes and seldom worries about tomorrow. Moomintroll loves Snork Maiden who appears to be of his species but it is not certain. The human is droll and deadpan. *FINN FAMILY MOOMINTROLL* (1948) features a magic top hat which can turn whoever or whatever puts it on into something quite different.

Jansson's mini-dialogues, which may occur between any of her characters at just about anytime, usually contain a kernel of truth, a bit of speculation about the nature of things.

"How does one get famous?" the Joxter asked.

"Oh, just by doing something that nobody else has been able to do."

"For instance?" asked the Joxter.

"Inventing a flying houseboat," said Hodgkins with shining eyes.

"I believe it's a bore to be famous," said the Joxter.

"Perhaps it's fun at first, but then I suppose you get used to it, and soon you're sick of it. Like on a Merry-go-round."

"What's that?"

And he's off explaining and drawing the merry-go-round. Jansson's books are written to be read to small children, though beneath the literal level lies a rather negative view of existence. Here is the Joxter's philosophy: "What a life! No end of changing and building-up and pulling-down and jumping about. Such a lot of work may turn out to be really harmful. Oh, I'm dejected just to think of all the people who work and buzz and bumble about, and of what it all leads to. I had a cousin once who studied trigonometry until his whiskers dropped off, and when he had learnt it all a Groke came and ate him up [*THE EXPLOITS OF MOOMINPAPPA*, 1952, p. 38]."

By 1971, there were eleven books.

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COPYRIGHTS

HOW TO REGISTER A COPYRIGHT AND PROTECT YOUR CREATIVE WORK

by Robert B. Chickering and Susan Hartman
Charles Scribner's Sons, Macmillan Publishing Co.
\$10.95

This book will tell you what you can copyright and how to go about it. It incorporates the latest changes in the law and covers public domain, transfers, exemptions, renewals and searches. Facsimiles of application forms are included along with detailed explanations and suggestions on how to get the forms and submit samples of your work.

If you're interested in what is happening in the legal world, send a couple of bucks to NOLO PRESS, 950 Parker Street, Berkeley, CA 94710. NOLO NEWS has good articles for the lay reader on what the law is doing to you and for you, reviews of the latest books, and lots of good lawyer jokes you can pass along at parties. The Summer, 1988, issue has a great cover cartoon by Phil Frank.

COMIX WAVE IS ALIVE AND WELL

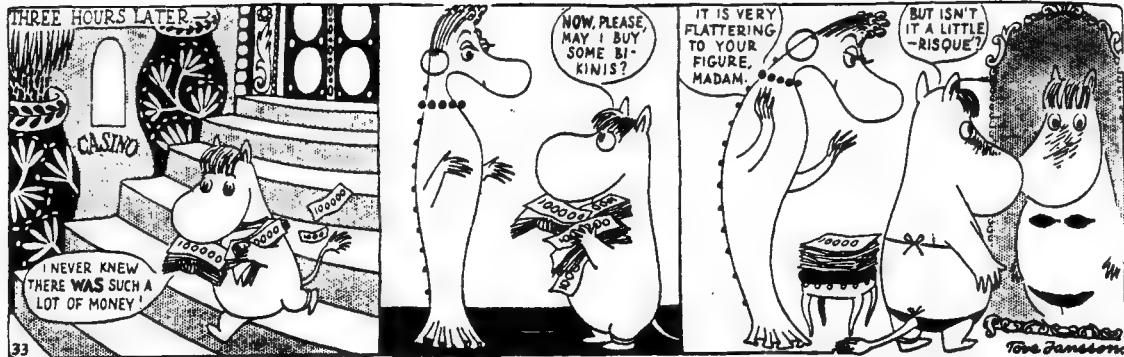
Mary Fleener said she had heard rumors that I had dropped out of the scene, but I'm still doing the same thing I always was. I suspect those rumors come from those who dropped off my mailing list. My newsletter is 15 years old this year. Unlike many comic publications, I try not to repeat myself all the time. I am doing research in various areas related to comics and I publish the results of that research in the newsletter along with some free advertising. I talk less about underground comix these days because I have said what I have to say about the subject and anyone can buy my back issues and read it if they wish. When I see something new in the comix, I'll write about it. Those who want to see pages and pages of ads, see the COMIX BUYERS GUIDE or COMIX F/X. I am a teacher and a writer, not just a source of free advertising.

KNOCKABOUT LOSES IN COURT CRUMB KEEPS ON GETTING BUSTED

Britain's KNOCKABOUT.COMICS lost a court case at Stratford's Magistrate Court on the 14th of January. They were defending LONELY NIGHTS, CANNIBAL ROMANCE, and WEIRDOS 11 and 14, all of which were busted for obscenity by Her Majesty's Customs. The books had been on sale for months before this bust took place. Publisher Tony Bennett made a case that the books were works of art and informed the Magistrate that the WEIRDOS had been seen on BBC television in an ARENA program featuring the work of Robert Crumb. The Magistrate disagreed and the books were confiscated. Knockabout had to pay court costs. WEIRDOS 15 and 19, HOMEGROWN COMICS, and ARCADE 7 have been seized under the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876, but no hearing date has been set. No jury was present on 14 January and it falls upon the Magistrate to decide whether the books are indecent or not.

FBI INFILTRATES LIBRARY SYSTEM

That person surreptitiously following you around the stacks may be a self-appointed FBI informant. The FBI has been trying to get librarians to keep track of people who check out books about the Soviet Union and other sensitive areas. Librarians have been outraged by this intrusion on American rights, but anyone who has read anything about Hoover's FBI knows that the FBI has been delving into everybody's business for years. This editor suggests it's a good idea for everyone to read all the books that come out about the FBI, CIA, and other government agencies that routinely snoop on the public. You have a right to know what your elected government is up to.



KIDNAPPERS INVADE CHARLES SCHULZ HOME IN SANTA ROSA

One Sunday evening in May, PEANUTS creator Charles Schulz and his wife were confronted by two masked gunmen at their hilltop home near Santa Rosa in Sonoma County. The men had entered through an unlocked door and were intent upon taking Mrs. Schulz. Jill Schulz, feeling something was wrong as she approached the house, went next door and called the police. Deputies from the Sheriff's Department arrived, but the two men fled into the surrounding foothills and were not found by land or air search. The incident was not made public until a week later because of concern for Schulz' privacy.

MOET DRUCKER NUMBER ONE

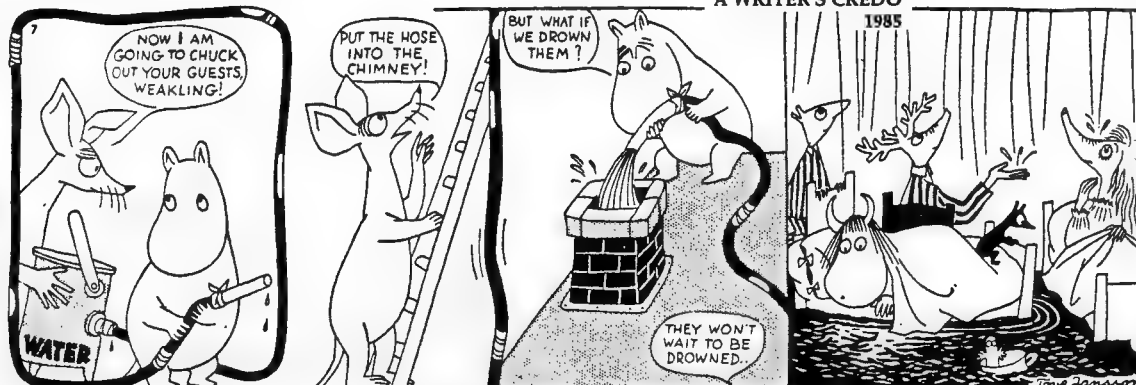
Caricaturist Moet Drucker was named Best Cartoonist of the Year by the National Cartoonists Society. He also won the award for special features. Drucker, a longtime MAD regular has had a couple of best sellers with his Ollie North and Donald Reagan coloring books. He will be a guest at this year's San Diego Comicon, August 4-7.

A REUBEN FOR CHUCK JONES

Charles M. Jones, creator of Pepe Le Pew and The Road Runner, won this year's Reuben Award for Best Animator.

Berkeley: a kid-friendly city?
Berkeley is not a kid-friendly city.
Homeless people beg for money.
Sometimes people break into people's cars.
They also rob houses and take things.
Kids sometimes have to walk alone and be scared.
Bad people call your name and make you come.
Then they try to hurt you.
Homeless people wait in front of the bank.
So when you come out they ask you for money.
They do the same at grocery stores.
There are bad torn up houses.
There's also pollution in the air sometimes.
Kids can't feel safe in their own homes.
They also can't feel safe in their own neighborhood.
So now I end my poem.

Leasa Woods
4th Grade



UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG
Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. \$1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrowns' and major titles. CRUMB, BODÉ, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.

BRUCE SWEENEY
25 WALTHAM #5
BOSTON, MA 02118

Mighty Mouse Drug Charges Denied

The Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association, a conservative consumer action group, has charged that a



Mighty Mouse: dope fiend?

cartoon broadcast on April 23 by CBS-TV depicted Mighty Mouse sniffing cocaine.

According to Wildmon, the mouse, withdrawn and depressed, sniffs at something; moments later, he is shown to be happy.

CBS says that Wildmon's charge is nonsense. According to George Dessard, vice president of program practices, Mighty Mouse — who, being a mouse is "clearly established as enjoying aromas" — takes a sniff of a bouquet. "We see the aroma reach his nose in typical cartoon fashion," said Dessard.

Cartoonist Ralph Bakshi called the allegations "lunacy."

...The writer must play his morally obligatory role as social critic, as spiritual guidon, as intellectual leader. I present this plain and simple argument not to defend but to define an old and honorable tradition in American letters, one still alive despite temporary muffling by this gross, slimy, gluttonous slum of a decade, this Age of Reaganism and Servility. The majority of American writers today have chosen passive nonresistance to things as they are, producing sloughs of poetry about their personal angst and anomie, cascades of short stories and rivers of novels obsessed with the nuances of domestic relationships—suburban hanky-panky—chic boutique shopping mall literary soap opera. When they do speak out on matters of controversy they attack not the evils of our time but fellow writers who may still insist on complaining. Updike, for example, in a recent review of Edmund Wilson's work, attacks Wilson for condemning the uses to which our federal government puts the money it extracts from American citizens. Wilson, in his grave for many years now, cannot respond to Updike's attack, but Wilson's words will live, I predict, long after Updike's fussy, prissy, precious novels have sunk into the oblivion they so richly deserve.

EDWARD ABBEY
A WRITER'S Credo

1985



A SALUTE TO RICHARD WILLIAMS' ROGER RABBIT

THE CHARACTER OF ROGER RABBIT IS COPYRIGHTED BY WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS AND AMBLIN ENTERTAINMENT. 1988.

WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT? Animated film produced by Disney and Amblin. Released June 22, 1988. Revives the technique of mixing live action with animated characters, a technique first used extensively by Walt Disney in his ALICE IN CARTOONLAND series in the early 1920s. Bob Hoskins plays the live hardboiled dick. This style of rabbit was first used by Disney in his Silly Symphony THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE (1935). Someone had given Disney a couple of wallabies and they were jumping around the studio [see Green] so Max Hare's behavior was patterned after those capricious wallabies. When Warner Brothers decided to do a rabbit hunt cartoon in 1939, they swiped Max and he evolved into Bugs Bunny, who has a cameo role in ROGER RABBIT. Marvel will publish the comic book version of WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?

HARD-BOILED

When you think of hard-boiled, you probably see Humphrey Bogart and Edward G. Robinson and John Garfield and George Raft. You think of Marilyn Monroe slinking her way through THE ASPHALT JUNGLE or Elizabeth Scott lighting up a cigarette or Veronica Lake shaking that leaf of blonde hair back from her forehead as she comes on to Alan Ladd. You think of Glenn Ford dancing with Rita Hayworth in GILDA or Peter Lorre's accent or the fat man sneering at the muzzle of Bogey's gun. You think of Dashiell Hammett and Nick and Nora Charles, of the strange narratives of Jim Thompson, the twists of fate in James M. Cain's DOUBLE INDEMNITY or THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE. You think of Raymond Chandler being critical of a nice little town like Hollywood where the women walk down Western in their bathrobes with cigarettes in the corners of their mouths and bottles of gin in their hands. Hard-boiled is tough talking guys and lethal women, the kind who might knife you in the back after an orgasm. It's amoral

and existential, the only attitude possible in a world where morality has gone down the tubes in the wakes of too many wars. It's post-depression talk filled with the realistic rhythms of Hemingway and Faulkner and Steinbeck and John Dos Passes, with the witty one-liners of Dorothy Parker and Henry Louis Mencken.

Most people think of movie images, not books, not writing. That's because the movies gave us the hard-boiled look while the books gave us the feel, the attitude. The hard-boiled hero was a guy living on the street on very little money in a tough world where everyone was in it for him or herself and nobody was very worried about getting to Sunday services on time. He was a tough-talking, heavy-drinking, heavy-smoking guy who seldom stopped to eat. He wanted to make it, to be successful, but it had to be honest. He wouldn't touch any crooked money. He was the lone moral person in a world where morality seemed to have gone down in flames. Picture Don Quixote riding Rocinante down Sunset to do battle with the neon

disco and punk world. In the end, the hard-boiled knight did what was morally right whatever the cost. Without that moral viewpoint, hard-boiled fiction would not have worked the way it did.

Hard-boiled was male. To understand what it was, think about what it wasn't. It wasn't the clean poisonings in Agatha Christie or Ngaio Marsh. P. D. James and Ruth Rendell are not Hard-boiled. Nor is Lillian Braun. W. R. Burnett Dashiell Hammett, Jim Thompson, Horace McCoy, Raymond Chandler, and James M. Cain are hardboiled. These guys are not into MURDER SHE WROTE [nice clean crimes for suburbanites], but into good old fashioned greed and lust. Hard-boiled is TRUE DETECTIVE and BLACK MASK, not SECRETS and TRUE CONFESSIONS. It was written with a male audience in mind, not for women. More often than not the women in the stories were temptresses, Liliths, vamps, seductresses, murderesses, part of a threatening world confronted daily by the man, the detective, the private eye, the Continental Op, The Thin Man, The Shadow, Nick Carter, Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, Mike Hammer. Women were dangerous and not to be trusted.

Books like THE BIG SLEEP, FAREWELL MY LOVELY, and THE MALTESE FALCON are too well known to need discussion here, but let's consider a thriller like Harry Whittington's WEB OF MURDER (Fawcett, 1958). A lawyer decides to kill his wife and get her money. He's in love with his secretary. Tired of being a prisoner of the wealthy wife. Sounds simple, but it works out like a good horror comic story with poetic justice. Whittington's summary of his anti-hero is worth repeating here: "No one of my heroes is ever permitted, by his own disenchanted sanity, to believe in the sanity of the social order around him. For example, a nation in which an administration bases its policy on industrial/military complex greed, can talk blandly the insanity of winning a nuclear war, insists upon sixteen thousand atomic warheads when three will be more than sufficient, and spend billions on it while refusing crumbs to dependent children and closing the Library of Congress at 5 P.M. daily; perhaps because that leadership got where it is by having never read more than three books in its combined life span, and wishing to provide every youth that same opportunity. My hero cannot put on the happy face.

He is pushed to the place where he can trust only himself, even when he recognizes the impossible odds he faces. This does not stop him because he would rather die fighting than to surrender to greed, corruption and meanheartedness, which places him as often at war with himself as with the uncompassionate and cynical power structure (xvii, Black Lizard edition, 1987)." WEB OF MURDER is told from the viewpoint of the killer, but

it is the cop Vanness who chases him down and fate which gives him a worse ending than the electric chair.

Hard-boiled was never taken seriously, you see. It was pulp stuff. Fast fiction for the slobs. Sneered at by the academy intellectuals [some of whom were writing it under pseudonyms]. Be that as it may, Hammett's RED HARVEST (1932) was every bit as intense an indictment of a corrupt society as Steinbeck's OF MICE AND MEN published a few years later. Hey, when Doctorow did it in WELCOME TO HARD TIMES, it was suddenly literature. Eastwood filmed the theme as PALE RIDER and it was suddenly pulp again.

What the hard-boiled writers did was analyze and attack social evil from the point of view of an ordinary guy who was usually a detective or a working cop or a lawyer, someone who would be on the street where the action was and could see how the sneaky actions of stock brokers and government officials affected regular people. Their method hasn't changed. It's still there in the new thrillers. So Bogey has been replaced by Arnold Schwarzenegger and the theme is now high tech. It's still the same message. If you don't hang on to your personal integrity and fight for it, life has no meaning.

SAN FRANCISCO MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SAN FRANCISCO MYSTERY MAGAZINE is a new tabloid for mystery mag collectors. \$2 for sample copy and ad rates from Philip Givens 300 Cabrillo, No. 1, San Francisco 941 415-751-0315.

COMIX FLUGOLA

FANTOONS 23 is \$1.50 from Ed Vick, 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Ed works on the newwave/minicomix tabloid, COMIX F/X. You can get a sample of the paper for \$1 from POB 95968, Seattle, WA 98145-2968. A limited micro-edition of Clay Geerdes' 1978 DISCO MOUSE is .50/stamp from CW. CEREBUS 110 and THE PUMA BLUES 17 out from Aardvark-Vanahelm. Renegade is now publishing WIMMEN'S COMIX. Comico's new title is Bernie Mireault's THE JAM; SUPER COOL COLOR INJECTED TURBO ADVENTURE #1 FROM HELL. See all these publishers at the San Diego Comicon, August 4-6. EL VIBORA 99 is \$7 pp from Jose M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3.08003, Barcelona, SPAIN. CHICKEN SLACKS 2 [\$2.75 PP] and THE DEMONS ONLY WE CAN SEE [.50/stamp] from Mary Fleener, 309 Oceanview, Encinitas, CA 92024. POCKET COMICS 5 [.50/stamp] from Victor Gates, 552 Lancelot Dr., North Salt Lake, Utah 84054. DOW JONES HITS 6000: A STUDY IN IMAGE DECAY [.50/stamp] from Tom Watkins, POB 1159, Wilmington DE 19899. Great rock star parody by Gilbert Shelton on the cover of the latest issue of RIP OFF COMIX.

CLAY GEERDES

UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG

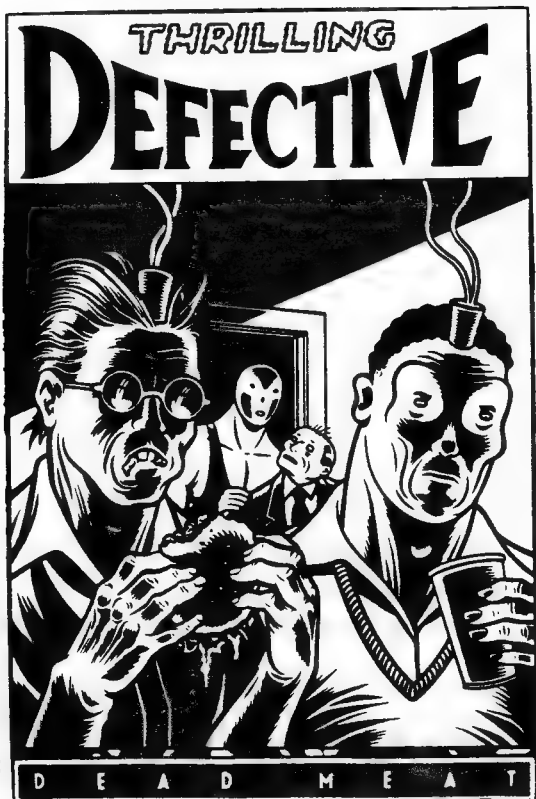
Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. \$1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrowns' and major titles. CRUMB, BODÉ, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.

BRUCE SWEENEY
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BOSTON, MA 02118

How do you parody pulp? It's easy if you're Charles Burns. In **HARD-BOILED DEFECTIVE STORIES** [New York: Pantheon Books, 1988], Burns takes on robotics, cults, cryonics, brainwashing, and numerous other contemporary fads and fallacies as he puts his mock hero, El Borbah through his paces. El Borbah could be Alley Oop in boots and a mask. With his face like a modified smiley, he is Burns' **BIG BABY** grown up. He wears a leotard that might have been made for a single-breasted Amazon warrior. It's color, purple, links him with Lee Falk and Phil Davis' **PHANTOM**. The dialogue is pure Hammett and Chandler. El Borbah drinks, smokes, thumps skulls, hates kids, and pushes service people around to prove how bad he is. The artwork is reminiscent of Chester Gould and Jack Kamen. The stories are E-C flashbacks by way of the *Twilight Zone* with the obligatory monster become the Good Guy. El Borbah qualifies as a parody of the hard-boiled detective-cum-superhero. He takes a bullet through the shoulder as easily as Batman, but unlike the Caped Crusader, El Borbah seldom uses weapons or gimmicks—just his big fists. There is a kind of twisted justice in Burns' stories, but it's probably no more bizarre than the justice we confront in the real world out here. Husbands and wives plot against one another a la James M. Cain, but Burns' art incorporates a lot of social criticism, often via eyeball kicks. Our local street paper, **EXPRESS**, began serializing a new **BIG BABY** story by Burns this year and the Yuppie readers have written lots of hate mail about it. Yuk! Disgusting! Just the reaction any socially aware artist would want. El Borbah first appeared in **HEAVY METAL**, but I usually see Burns' stuff in **EL VIBORA**. He appeared in several issues

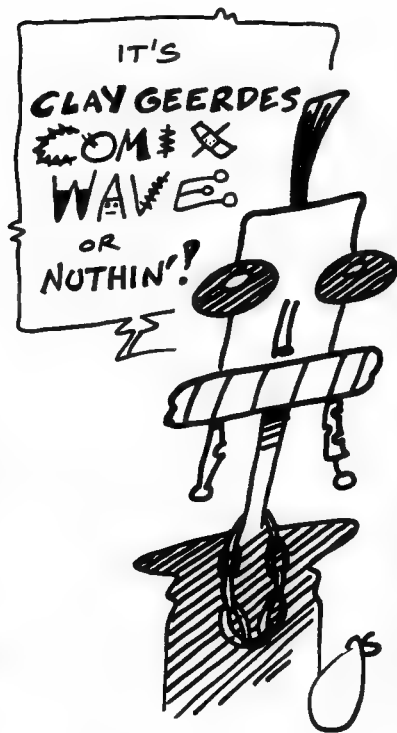


of **DEATH RATTLE** and Raw Books did a nice hardback edition of **BIG BABY** dealing with the **CURSE OF THE MOLEMEN**. I thought he did just as well as Dick Tracy chasing The Mole or Superman in that forties serial. Great atmosphere. Burns chiaro-oscuro style captures the feeling of night and nightmare.



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ROGER RABBIT REDUX

Nostalgia. I got irritated a few times when I was writing about Garis and Burgess and people said I was writing nostalgia with the implication that this was negative. Fact is, none of it is nostalgia for the young reader who has never heard of these writers. It is only nostalgia for the seasoned vet who has read and heard everything, the guy who is reminded of his own childhood when he sees Uncle Wiggily or Peter Rabbit. This entire anti-nostalgia attitude is nothing but a market ploy. The entertainment industry has to negate the old and promote the new in order to keep the bucks rolling in. What is Roger Rabbit but Bugs Bunny in clown make-up?

In Gary Wolf's 1981 novel, **WHO CENSORED ROGER RABBIT?**, the bunny is obviously Bugs, though he is about the same height as Harvey. Who's Harvey? He was an invisible Pooka who appeared in a single play named for himself by Mary Chase back in 1944. Actually, she copyrighted the play as **THE WHITE RABBIT** in 1943. Harvey hung out with Elwood P. Dowd (pretty close to Elmer Fudd) who was portrayed by James Stewart in the 1950 film version. There wasn't really any significance to Harvey being a rabbit anymore than there is to Roger, because he could have been any kind of animal or creature. He was just another in a long series of talking

animals. Wolf alludes to numerous strip characters in his novel, which is logical since his book and the **ROGER RABBIT** movie are miles apart. About all Spielberg did was buy the rights. Animator Richard Williams and Director Robert Zemeckis took a few ideas from the book, then improvised the rest. I think they were so preoccupied with the form that the content got away from them. Ballantine has reissued the novel to cash in on the movie and it reads well. I liked it better than the film, mainly because the plot is more cohesive and I was able to get more of a feel for the characters. I sort of hated that Marvel plot that filled up the second half of **ROGER RABBIT**, that re-make of the worst of **HOWARD THE DUCK**. Judge Doom and his steamroller and the Dip and all that crapola. At least this time, nobody sold the idea of having a guy walking around in a rabbit costume, and we got some great animation, but, truthfully, some of that stuff was just too dumb. Those weasels from **WIND IN THE WILLOWS** were a real drag.

Nobody seems to be bothered by the bestiality of the film. People I have talked to think it's okay for a woman to be married to a rabbit. Hey, it was okay for Betty Boop to hug and kiss and hang out with her dog, Bimbo, for ten years, but then Betty started out as a dog in her first cartoon, **DIRTY DISHES** (1930), and Jessica Rabbit doesn't have that excuse. In the film, this is never explained, but in Wolf's novel Roger found a magic lantern and used one of his wishes to make Jessica marry him, hence she only did it because the genie made her do it. Book and film retain the idea of Toons being real and working for real people, but Wolf deals with the comic strip world, not with animation and much of his plot concerns ripped off strip art. From the prices, we know we are in the contemporary world, because strip art wasn't valued at all until recently. When people began to be interested in Carl Barks' work in the seventies, an editor at Western told me after Barks' duck pages were shot, the originals were thrown in the trash behind the building. Obviously, Spielberg had to dump this plot since he opted for a story set in 1947. While Wolf alludes to Smilin' Jack, Smokey Stover, Dick Tracy, and other stars of strip art, Spielberg rehashes a Hammett plot interspersed with what are mainly ideas from Tex Avery cartoons. Disney characters

play a negligible part in the film. In Wolf, there is one allusion to a ghetto, and he parallels their Mickey Mouse inside a mousehole in Eddie Valiant's people and of Indians. On the apartment, and that's it for other hand neither Wolf nor the Disney. Since Spielberg and filmmakers seem to be aware that Disney were doing the first women suffer the same kind of team-up of their characters, some made, but it really amounts to overkill.

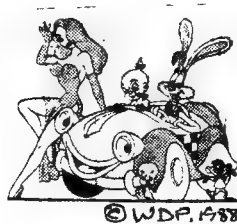
The Warner cartoons were still going full blast in 1947 and Bugs Bunny had been a big star since 1942. Roger Rabbit seems to be based on a combination of Nutsy Squirrel and the earlier Bugs Bunny, the zany Daffy Duck imitation who appeared in the first two Bugs cartoons in 1939. Roger is nothing like Max Hare from whom Bugs was swiped by the Warner gang, but he does have a little in common with Disney's conception of Brer Rabbit, the most recent rabbit character to appear circa 1947. Brer Rabbit starred in **SONG OF THE SOUTH** with a lot of humans in 1946 and he sort of has a bulb nose like the one given to Roger. Wolf had the idea that Toons could create doubles of themselves by thinking them up. These doubles or doppelgangers took the punishment on camera just like stunt people. I don't know why this idea wasn't used in the film, because it is unique.

In Wolf's book, characters have contracts with publishers and they pose for strips. Wolf suggested the discrimination era we're living through against the Toons, that they were



COMIX PLUGOLA

CEREBUS at #111. Comico has just published the book version of the first part of Matt Wagner's **GRENDAL**, illustrated by the Pander Brothers.* Lee Meryl has **HAIRBOY** 2. 60¢ pp. 1 David Lane, Apt 4-A, Yonkers, N Y 10701.* Mick Cusimano has **MODERN ART**. 75¢ pp. POB 2565, Harvard Square Station, Cambridge, MA 02238.* **FROG AND DOG** 1 is \$1 pp from James Gill, 837 Park Ave., Tallahassee, FLA 32301.* **MR. FIX'S LOST SLICE AT SMUTPUTT!** is 75¢ pp from Scott Stevens, 2725 Franklin, #1211, Mesquite, TX 75150.* **MISC** 24 is \$1 pp from Randy Laske, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741.* **THE SAVAGE SWORD OF MIKE** 1 by Matt Howarth is \$2.75 pp from Fandom House, POB 1348, Denver, CO 80201. **PHOENIX RESTAURANT** is a nice book of drawings from the same publisher. \$4.50 pp.* **ANT BOY** 1 is 2.75 pp from Steeldragon Press, Box 7253, Powderhorn Sta, Mpls, MN 55407.*



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JEROME DAVID SALINGER

The first time I heard about J. D. Salinger I was working on the primary belt at the Rincon Annex of the San Francisco Post Office in 1961 with a Columbia drop-out named John Bennett. For a long time, Bennett and I were cagey and didn't really talk to each other, then we began to discover a lot of intellectual quirks in common and for a long time after that we were good buddies. We were both temps at the post office, students who worked four hours a day to help with the rush of afternoon mail. We were called blue badges in contrast to the tired-looking white-faced guys who were known as regulars, the guys who often put in ten or twelve hours a day. It's deadly work, casing mail, sacking, pushing gurneys across miles of concrete from one station to the next. The boredom would kill any thinking person if he couldn't talk endlessly with those around him. I was always a blabbermouth, always walking around talking about Chaucer or Shakespeare while sorting packages or dumping mail on the City Dump. John became a close friend and taught me more than a lot of my profs at State. He loved to analyze literature, to get at the symbols inherent in stories. It was John who said, laughing himself, that 'the laughing man' was Jesus.

We all loved the work of Salinger in the early sixties. We followed each new story as it came out just as we were to follow the symbolism of Bob Dylan's lyrics a few years later. No one realized when *Hapworth, 1924* came out in *THE NEW YORKER* in 1965 that we were reading the last public statement of Salinger, a coda to the Glass family which had preoccupied him from the late forties on. Everyone read and re-read *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*, *FRANNY AND ZOOEY*, and *RAISE HIGH THE ROOF BEAM*, *CARPENTERS*. Seymour Glass had committed suicide in *A FINE DAY FOR BANANAFISH* in 1948. Everyone I knew had a copy of the Signet edition of the *NINE STORIES* Salinger chose to reprint from his early work. One of the most interesting characters was Seymour Glass. Old Seymour became a puzzle for all academe and we had a lot of fun speculating on the various reasons, realistic and mystical, for his suicide. Was his fashion plate wife, Muriel, based on the French woman Salinger married just after the war? Who was that enigmatic little girl he met on the beach. At that time, none of us knew of Salinger's experience as a soldier involved in the invasion of

Normandy in June of 1944 or we might have understood Seymour's postwar neurosis. The father of one of my sister's closest high school friends returned from Europe after the war and one day he went out in a Nebraska field and hanged himself from an elm tree.

Everyone was curious about Salinger. Who was this guy? Was he anything like Holden Caulfield? Did he really go to a military academy? Did he have a baby sister? Was he a Jesus freak? What was his trip anyway? While I was at State, Mark Harris got a gig from LIFE to go to New Hampshire and do a piece on Salinger. What followed was one of the longest articles I have seen about everything but the subject. Harris never talked to Salinger, because Salinger doesn't talk to strangers. He dropped out of the New York literary scene very early and retired to Cornish, New Hampshire. He married Claire in February of 1955 and raised his family (Margaret, born in 1955, and Matthew, born in 1960). He had wanted fame and notoriety as a young man, but found it a disappointment. Salinger liked to preach and he found people a bit put out when he told them where it was at parties. A successful literary lion he was not, nor did he want to be.

All of this is spelled out in Ian Hamilton's *SEARCH FOR J. D. SALINGER* (1988), a book that shouldn't have been published. This is a good biography, well written, informative, etc., but it was not authorized by Salinger; in fact, he sued to prevent it. This only made things worse, because it forced him to go public. He had to go to New York to give his deposition and the lawyer who took it became famous as the only person who ever got an interview out of Salinger. Well, what about this? Does Salinger have a right to his privacy? Are his letters in the public domain? Do they belong to him or just to anyone who decides to sit down and construct a biography around them? Do we have a right to know all the intimate details of this man's life just because he wrote some stories a few years back? Does writing make one a public figure like a politician or an actor? Obviously, Hamilton feels the public has a right to know about someone who has sold as many novels as Salinger and the curious would agree with him. If you have been in the public eye, however briefly, you might be inclined to side with the author. It is realistic to think that a gossip-hungry populace is always going to want to know the color of a celebrity's bedsheets and the scandal tabloids in the super market feed this

lust for minutia, but is it appropriate where a literary figure is concerned? Salinger wanted fame until he got it, then he wanted to quit but found it's not that easy. There is a well-beaten path to his redwood home in Cornish and his wife has had to turn away more than a few groupies and pilgrims. For many, the search for Salinger is a religious quest. He has a lot of true believers out here. He's the guru and his home is a shrine. Surely, his own studies of Eastern philosophy have taught him this.

Mark David Chapman, the assassin who murdered John Lennon, claimed on a PBS documentary which I saw in 1988 that he thought of himself as Holden Caulfield. *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* was his Bible and he was retracing Holden's footsteps. He killed "that phony" John Lennon and put "the final nail in the coffin of the sixties." A copy of *CATCHER* was found in the room of John Hinckley, the man who tried to kill Ronald Reagan. Well, so what? What does this have to do with Salinger? He certainly can't keep people from reading his books and imitating his characters. At the same time, he must realize that any public work becomes a pattern to be imitated and he does have a certain amount of responsibility for that pattern. Holden Caulfield was no killer, but numerous characters like him have become the standard prime time psychotics we have watched killing and raping their way through the seventies and eighties. This is the theme of *THE DEAD POOL*, the latest Clint Eastwood thriller, wherein a psycho is imitating the horror films he has seen. Can Salinger just drop out and ignore the other side of his communication?

If the novel is a form of communication, it is between the writer and the reader. Doesn't the reader have a right to reply? Must he be passive and accept? I think not. It's always been my way to talk back to television, to the movies, to books I read, to anything that suggests *this is the way it is or that is what is done*. I talk back. A friend of mine at State actually called Salinger on the telephone and got through! It wasn't much of a conversation, but Salinger did talk to him for a minute. I forget what was said, but the point is significant. He felt he had to talk back to the Catcher, to make the communication two-ways. If it isn't, what is it but dogma? I agree and disagree with Harrison. The problem is that the reader comes away from this biography disliking Salinger and it isn't fair to evaluate someone on the basis of a few negative experiences people have had with him. Go a little further and

you might find exactly the opposite. I expect Salinger was a good father. I've seen his son on television a number of times and I'd say he got a lot of what he is from his dad. I don't know this. He may write his own *Daddy Dearest* in a couple of years like many celebrity sons, but it's simply a fact that Salinger tried to protect his children from the rat race. They were raised in a small town where they could grow up playing baseball, swimming, biking, hiking, and living normal lives instead of snorting coke with the brat pack and getting burned out before they even started living. Harrison is punishing Salinger in print for not cooperating with his book and he has no right to do that. He is the intruder, not the nice guy he wants us to think he is.

It's my own feeling that Salinger wrote himself into a corner with the Glass family and as the years passed he realized he had said what he wanted to say. He no longer wanted to talk to the public. Now the ordinary person isn't going to understand this very well, but most writers will. When I write this newsletter each month I always deal with the conflict of writing partially to people I know and like, folks I want to communicate with, and partially to people I don't really like or want to talk to at all. No writer has control over who reads his stuff. You get it out there and it's read by the good, the bad, and the ugly. Fine, but if you think about that, if you let it bother you, it can clog up the creative arteries. You can think, I don't really want to talk to those people at all. Any teacher can understand this problem. You walk in the classroom and there are the friends and enemies all sitting together. You have to address your remarks to them all.

I think Salinger's experience with the hype side of publishing, the promo parties, and particularly with people who edited and changed his stuff proved too negative for him. He just got sick of it all and quit. I think it bothered him to see all those academic careers kept alive with parasitic articles interpreting his material, the myth and symbol, theme and structure gang who have a stranglehold on the eclectic quarterlies. Salinger has never been a mystery to me. He wrote some fascinating stories and I enjoyed them and in my book the man has a right to retire to the country and tend his garden. He certainly has a right to decide if and when his own personal letters will be published.

UNDERGROUND COMIX CATALOG
Once again I have revised my catalog of underground comix. \$1 gets you a listing of 700 titles, including reading copies and rarities, 'homegrown' and major titles. CRUMB, BODE, CORBEN, and SPIEGELMAN are all here.
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SAN DIEGO COMICON '88

In the fifteen years I have attended the San Diego Comic Convention I have seen it grow from a small organization to a massive adjunct to the Eastern comics industry. This is not particularly bad, just different, but nonetheless I cannot help but feel the impersonal nature of what is now a giant trade show with just about everything else lost in the shuffle. This year there were two giant dealer's rooms, one filled with all of the comic companies, the other with independent dealers and retailers. In the mid-seventies I used to walk around the con and meet people I knew every few tables. Most of those people have been replaced by a new generation of artists, the majority of whom are employed by the plethora of independent companies that have come into being since the underground comix of the sixties proved the west coast to be a good spot to rebel against the control of the Eastern monopolies. I don't know the inside story on most of these new companies and do not pretend any expertise on their internal structure or politics. I suspect a few are doing quite well financially, while others are hanging on by the skin of their teeth in hopes of winning out in the current weeding out process. What I felt at the con was a sense of *business*. I felt like a stranger walking through the halls of an impersonal building looking at the company names on a lot of doors that were closed to me. Some of the feeling comes from my having grown older and less a part of the scene, but I'm not paranoid; the convention is now closely analogous to the American Booksellers' Convention which I've attended several

times. Business has taken over and the joy of art flies out the window when money and business deals are the focal point.

I used to feel like a member of the San Diego Con. I supported it and promoted it. I acted as liaison with Bay Area artists and was responsible for getting many of them included in the convention in the mid-seventies. I wrote about the con, planted newspaper articles, contributed to the program book, spoke on panels, and I felt like a member of the family. This year I felt like a stranger, just one of hundreds of artists and publishers on a computerized guest list. In the seventies when I went to the banquet and the cocktail party which followed, I met and talked with people like Mike Royer and Jack Kirby and Wally Wood and Gilbert Shelton and Dave Sheridan and Larry Todd and Joyce Farmer and Lyn Chevli and many others; everyone went to the banquet and party. The past couple of years I have seen no one I knew at these giant ballroom parties which are now nothing but a drink hustle for the hotel in which they are given. The invitation is a joke, because anyone can walk in and nothing personal is going to take place there anyway. The real parties are now held in the hotels, private parties for the in-group, paid for by the bosses for the employees.

A few years back I remember Dan O'Neill playing his banjo and singing. Well, it was small then and people had time for each other. They enjoyed the camaraderie and entertained each other. Now it's business and people are dealing. It's bigger hotels like the dreary Omni with its shopping mall atmosphere. I ran into Sody Clampett and she was nostalgic for the early days when we used the El Cortez Hotel.

I guess I kept missing people. I could see Greg Irons sitting at one of Ron Turner's tables drawing pictures of Gregor. I could hear Bob Clampett telling me how he and the guys at Termite Terrace used to get around the censors to get those sex jokes into the cartoons. Larry Todd would be telling me the story of an entire issue of *Dr. Atomic*. Too many of my friends are dead or have dropped out and I don't know any of these new people and they don't know me or have any interest in knowing me. Why should they? After all, it's business now and what can I do for them? Over the years I gave what I had, encouragement, publicity, tips, introductions, time, energy. For the underground cartoonists, so many of whom died young, I fought a losing battle. I chronicled their work in *COMIX WORLD*, but most of the articles that have appeared in the eighties have continued to focus upon Robert Crumb

and a few others to the neglect of everyone else. The star system, inbred in every aspect of American art and entertainment, has prevailed. Ah, well, many are called, but few are chosen. The underground comix needed Fredric Wertham and he didn't come along. If he had, the reaction to his attempt to repress the comix might have given them the impetus needed to escape the hippy ghettos and infiltrate the straight world.

Vestiges of underground comix survive at the convention, but surprisingly enough the alternative or black and white comix which assimilated many of the artists continue to outsell them. The black and whites get distribution, the undergrounds seldom do. I've been told that Larry Welz' **CHERRY POPTART** sells very well at gas stations in the midwest. Looks like it has replaced the eight-pagers of the thirties. Salesmen used to sell the Tijuana Bibles and eight millimeter sex films all across the midwest and the Bible Belt. They carried their linens and vases and photo albums from town to town going from door to door and visiting with lonely housewives, but they made most of their profit off the under-the-counter sex items they sold to gas station and pool hall owners. A drummer from Los Angeles used to sell decks of pornographic playing cards in the Derby where I played pool in Lincoln, Nebraska, as a teenager. He took his customers back to the john to show them what he had. Got five bucks a deck for cards he probably picked up at a dime a pack by the gross.

Ron Turner was not in the dealer dealer's room, but in the same spot he has had for the past decade or so. Fred Todd had a table for Rip Off Press in the commercial room. I was going to say hello to him but he was always busy when I stopped by and he didn't seem to recognize me anyway. I'm older, but so is he. We have gone from being avant-garde to being somewhat passé, the old dinosaurs hanging on, chased by samurai bunnies and ninja turtles and a menagerie of hostile creatures which, old hat to us, are nevertheless new and exciting to most of the kids swarming bug-eyed about us. I didn't connect with Gilbert Shelton, but Paul Mavrides who is now doing the bulk of the work on the Freak Brothers said Shelton was selling his house and moving back to Europe. Paris, he said.

Jules Feiffer was there for the first time and he's a lot taller than I expected. I listened to him for awhile, but most of what he had to say is in an extensive interview in *THE COMICS JOURNAL* and I see no reason to repeat it here. I've always enjoyed Feiffer's work and still do. Agree with his politics. Disagree

with his comments about Wally Wood's work, but it's his opinion. Like the rest of us, Feiffer's life is replete with contradictions, but he, at least, makes no pretense at being politically correct all the time.

The Centerfold Shop had a Jessica Rabbit walking around posing. She was in the costume contest. The Shop specializes in PLAYBOYS and the fallout from Hefner's trip. Anything collected ultimately becomes cultic. By now everyone is sick of all that Roger Rabbit crap, but it's only money.

A lot of newavers were on the scene. Jim Williams showed me some great stuff that is still in search of a publisher. Valentino talked to David Miller and me for awhile, showed us his Marvel covers. Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird were drawing turtles at the Mirage table. Kevin introduced us to April, the model for the character in his series, filled us in

on the toys and tv projects. Steve "Dogboy" Lafler was in New York. Funny to think about newave. There is a new wave every few days. A lot of the guys who joined COMIX WAVE in their teens are now grown up, married, and trying to figure out how to support their families. The vanguard becomes the old guard in weeks in this electronic era.

The major influences in this current period of black and white comix appear to be Japanese styles and legends, film noir, MAD, Jack Kirby, you name it. In a time when so much of the earlier comic art is being republished, it would be impossible to pinpoint exactly what triggered a specific artist to jump into the game. I'm just too impatient to sit and listen to people on panels mumbling into microphones, so you'll have to read about the content of those sessions elsewhere. One thing that does bother me is hearing so much negative rap. I don't like to see a well-known artist putting down one of his peers in front of a young audience, and I hate the kind of in-group shop talk one hears from the old pros who ought to know better. Who gives a damn about their bitchy battles with the companies they deal with? There is nothing inspiring about that kind of bullshit, yet many of the panels at cons have degenerated into nothing but in-group griping. Hey, if there are so many rip-offs in the business and so many short-sighted assholes running things, why not go into some other line of work?

Frankly, I didn't see anything new this year. I saw mostly imitation. Second hand art, a lot of it technically sound and nice to look at, visual candy, but there were no new exciting under-grounds and as I walked from company to company I was amazed at the number of second-rate superheroes and Japanese monsters and unfunny animals that have proliferated the field and dominate the minds and waste the time of the young artists.

Ahh, fuck you, Clay. Go back to your rocking chair and your old Droopy cartoons. Be optimistic. After all, you could have been covering the Democratic or Republican conventions.



"Nah, I'm not shopping. I just stopped by to try on this perfume before my date."



"I had the most boring evening. I went to a drive-in...and saw /ahler...with my brother."



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COMIX PLUGOLA

EL VIBORA 101, and 102 \$8 ea. from Jose M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3.08003, Barcelona, Spain.* CEREBUS 112-113 is a double-issue from Aardvark Vanaheim. THE PUMA BLUES continues with #18.* SUBURBAN NIGHTMARES 1 and 2 will take you back to the fifties. Good writing. From Renegade Press. The same publisher has gathered together Arn Saba's miscellaneous NEIL THE HORSE strips and art in issues 14 and 15 of that title. SHERLOCK HOLMES series continues with 13 and AGENT UNKNOWN is up to issue 3.* UNSUPERVISED EXISTENCE is a well-written little DZ. 2 issues out to date. \$1 pp each from Terry Laban, 2101 Dexter, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.* DISTORTED FEATURES 3 is 50¢/stamp from Mike Morris, POB 4687, Portland, OR 97208-4687.* JUST ANOTHER EIGHT PAGE WONDER 10 is 50¢/stamp from Walt Rodgers, POB 605, Blairstown, NJ 07825.* MISC 26 is \$1.50 pp from Randy Paske, 656 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741.* Jim Ryan is back with SMEAR. \$1 PP, 41 Forest Ave., Albany, NY, 12208.* Bob Vojtko has started a comic paper, THE CARTOON TRIBUNE. Send him a \$1 and he'll send a sample, I'm sure. POB 226, Lorain, OH 44052.* Scott Stevens is doing a guest issue of BABYFAT [#61]. 50¢/stamp from me. I am still doing BABYFAT and FRIED BRAINS as regular mini titles. If you would like to contribute, send me a panel.*



Comix Wave 70!

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FAN'TOONS 24 is \$1.50 from Edd Vick, 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Ed works on the newwave mini-comix tabloid, COMIX F/X. You can get a sample of the paper for \$1 from POB 95968, Seattle, WA 98145-2968. Bruce Sweeney's column is now running in F/X. Brad Foster still publishes his own line of mini-comix. GOODIES is up to issue 50 and STUFF to 11. Write to Jabberwocky Graphix, 4109 Pleasant Run, Irving, TX, for his catalog.* ELF THE BARBARIAN 2 AND RED VALIRIA 2 are \$1 cash from Kenny Moran, 244 Balmoral, Wpg., Manitoba, Canada R3C 1X6.* MISC 25 is \$2 from Randy Paske, 656 Birch Ln, Gilbert, MN 55141.* Joseph Williams, 901 Oakland, #5, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 has 4 7x9 DZs: SURPRISE COMIX, BO COMIX, TALES FROM THE CHOW, and DEMENTED COMIX. \$3 should get you the 4. EL VIBORA is 100! Still grossing out Spain. \$10 from Jose M. Berenguer, Plaza Beatas 3.08003, Barcelona, Spain.*

TALES CALCULATED TO GIVE YOU ROAD RASH 1.

Just when you thought Underground comix had passed into the sewer of history, along comes ROAD RASH to restore your faith. If you've even been a skateboarder, this one is right up your ramp. Some great art by John Phillips who made the old SLUG Worth collecting. You can get a copy for \$2.75 pp from Phillips Studios, 4401 Soquel Dr. Soquel, CA 95073.



THE CULT OF BETTY

It was Jeff Rund that revived Betty Page and turned a whole generation of guys used to those angular fashion models in *PLAYBOY* back to rounded women. Jeff ran a couple of issues of *BETTY PAGE* back in the seventies and it's quite probable that Dave Stevens saw at least one of them when he was deciding on the model to be used for the heroine in *THE ROCKETEER*. That's not certain. I didn't ask him, but it's plausible so I'll go with it until corrected. Betty had that 'girl next door' look that *PLAYBOY* cultivated in the pre-plastic surgery days when both models and photographers accepted nature instead of redesigning it with latex and silicone.

Pin-up artists always make a living. That's the word from inside the comic business. Back in the days when Al Capp introduced the first major pin-up girls with Daisy Mae and Wolf Gal and Moonbeam McSwine [the latter with help from Frank Frazetta], it was said that no cartoonist who could draw a beautiful female would ever go hungry. Whether that is truth or myth, we'll never know, but cartoonists did make a good living when their strips were widely syndicated. Today's pin-up artists tend to make their money from the money companies and do their comics more as a hobby. I suspect one movie poster means more bucks than an entire comic book. I think Bill Stout told me that at a comic convention years ago. Maybe it was Stevens. Too long ago. That shouldn't be true, but I doubt that Matt Baker who did those beautiful *Phantom Ladies* and jungle women ever wound up



with much money in the bank. I know Wally Wood didn't.

Anyway, Dave Stevens reintroduced Betty Page in his *Rocketeer* series, the newest of which has just started from Comico, and there are two issues of *THE BETTY PAGES*, a New York zine that covers or uncovers Betty periodically.

I'm going to avoid the sexist, sex object, discussion here. If you're a young comic reader, you probably love all those space and jungle women in their bikinis and could care less what the feminists think about it all. If you are a sensitive woman who thinks pin-up art is exploitation, best avoid comic books entirely. Hey, avoid *MS. MAGAZINE*, too. Or wasn't that a pin-up of Cindy Lauper on the cover? Personally, I like looking at girls and their bodies sometimes [usually when I'm awake] and since most of the photos in the women's mags are of women I suspect women enjoy the same activity though perhaps for different reasons. In any case, pin-up art has returned to the comix world and Stevens is the finest craftsman in this field since Frank Frazetta and Boris Vallejo.

The covers on the new *JUNGLE* series are worth the cover price. The interior art is so-so and the stories are even less so-so, but, hey, just tear off the covers and keep them in a binder.

C. G.



above: Private photo above produced hundreds of nude and semi-nude shots of Betty Page.

©Dave Stevens, 1988



Dave Stevens, San Diego Con.